TALKS ON THE GITA

BY

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PREFACE

Acharya Vinoba Bhave's Talks on the *Bhagavad Gita* were given to his fellow-prisoners in Dhulia Jail, West Khandesh, Bombay State, on eighteen successive Sundays, beginning on February 21st, 1932, and ending on June 19th, 1932. Delivered in Marathi, the discourses were first recorded and published in that language. Later, after revision by Vinobaji, they were translated into Hindi, Bengali, Gujerati, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Oriya, Sindhi, Urdu, Kannada and Konkani. Nearly a million copies have been sold.

The present translation, based on the Marathi and Hindi originals, was published in instalments in the *Sunday Standard* (Madras, Bombay and Delhi) from December 1956 to September 1957. Several friends have helped to make the rendering faithful and readable.

It is hoped that the English rendering of this seminal work will bring to the reader who does not know any Indian language the rich and growing tradition that Vinobaji would have us *live*.

AKHIL BHARAT SARVA SEVA SANGH

26th May 1958

A note on Indian terms

The translators have retained some essential Sanskrit words and tried to bring out their meaning in the context. When single words have thus been used, no attempt has been made to indicate vowel quantity.

In longer quotations, however, length of vowels has been indicated by doubling. Sanskrit *e* and *o* are always pronounced long.

Owing to limitations of time and equipment, it has not been possible to show the difference between the front and back sounds in the *s*, *t*, and *n* series.

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CHAPTER I

I. INTRODUCTION : THE *YOGA* OF DESPONDENCY.

(1) At the heart of the Mahabharata

DEAR BROTHERS,

From today, I shall speak to you about *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*. The bond between the *Gita* and me transcends reason. My heart and mind have both received more nourishment from the *Gita* than my body has from my mother's milk. Where the heart is touched, there is no room for argument. Leaving logic behind, I beat the twin wings of faith and practice and, to the best of my ability, fly up into the heavens of the *Gita*. I live and move in the atmosphere of the *Gita*. The *Gita* is my life's breath. To vary the image, I swim in the sea of the *Gita* when I speak of it ; but when I am alone, I dive to the depths of this ocean of nectar and there rest at ease. It has been decided that I should tell you every Sunday the story of this Mother, the *Gita*.

The *Gita* has been set in the *Mahabharata*. Standing in the middle of the epic, the *Gita* is like an elevated lamp which throws its light on the whole of the *Mahabharata*. On one side of it, there are six *parvas*, and on the other, twelve. Similarly on one side there are seven divisions of the army, and on the other, eleven. In between, the *Gita* is being taught.

The *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* are the classics of our nation. The characters that figure in them have become one with our lives. For thousands of years now the whole of Indian life has been, as it were, consecrated by the heroes and heroines of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* like Rama, Sita, Dharmaputra, Draupadi, Bhishma and Hanuman. The characters of no other classics in the world have thus blended with the lives of the people. Looked at

in this way, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* are undoubtedly wonderful works. If the *Ramayana* is an enthralling ethical poem, the *Mahabharata* is a comprehensive treatise on the science of society. Vyasa has in his hundred thousand *slokas* given us innumerable portraits, customs and heroic actions which are as beautiful as they are real. The *Mahabharata* tells us clearly that none but God is wholly free from blemish ; that none too is an embodiment of absolute evil. On the one hand, faults are pointed out even in Bhishma and Yudhishthira, and, on the other, light is shed on the good points of Karna and Duryodhana. The *Mahabharata* describes human life as a fabric woven out of both black and white threads. Himself standing aloof, Bhagavan Vyasa projects on the screen of the world a picture, made up of both light and shade, of the universal movement. Because of this perfect detachment and the high literary skill of Vyasa, the *Mahabharata* has turned out to be a huge mine containing pure gold. Let us now explore it and carry away from it all the wealth we can.

The *Mahabharata* has become a byword for bigness ; but has not Vyasa anything of his own to tell us ? Has he given in any place any special message of his own ? Where is Vyasa's heart-beat to be heard ? Again and again we come to jungle upon jungle of philosophy and preaching in the *Mahabharata* : but has he also given anywhere the essence of all this, the central secret of this massive work ? Yes, he has. Vyasa has, so to speak, taken out the cream of the whole of the *Mahabharata* and put it in the *Gita*. The *Gita* forms the epitome of the teaching of Vyasa, the quintessence of his thought. That is why Sri Krishna says : "I am Vyasa among the sages." This manifestation of Krishna in Vyasa becomes fullest in the *Gita*. From ancient times the *Gita* has been given the status of an *Upanishad*. The *Gita* is the *Upanishad* of *Upanishads*, because Lord

Krishna has drawn the milk of all the *Upanishads* and given it in the form of the *Gita* to the whole world ; Arjuna is only an excuse. Almost every idea necessary for the flowering of a full life occurs in the pages of the *Gita*. That is why men of experience have said, truly, that the *Gita* is a treasure-house of the knowledge of *dharma*. Though small in size, the *Gita* is an important text of Hindu *dharma*.

Everyone knows that the *Gita* was spoken by Sri Krishna. The devotee *Arjuna*, who listened to this great lesson, became so identified with it that he too came to be called 'Krishna.' Vyasa, trying to express the heart of the Lord and his lover, lost himself so completely that he too came to be called 'Krishna.' The speaker is Krishna, the listener is Krishna, the reporter is Krishna—thus all the three have, so to speak, become one, each fulfilling himself in this oneness. To study the *Gita*, then, a concentration of this kind is necessary.

(2) Arjuna's stand

Some people think that the *Gita* should be taken to begin from the Second Chapter. If the actual teaching commences in the eleventh *sloka* of the Second Chapter, why not start from there ? Someone even told me, "God has said that He manifests himself in 'अ' among the letters of the Nagari alphabet. Here the *sloka* '*asochyaananvasochastvam*' begins spontaneously with the letter 'अ' So we should take that as the beginning." Apart from this argument, in many ways it would be quite right to take this as the beginning. All the same, the introductory portion preceding this does have a value of its own. Without this preliminary narrative we cannot properly understand where exactly Arjuna stands and what the *Gita* is intended to teach.

Some say that the *Gita* was spoken in order to remove *Arjuna's* weakness and make him enter the battle. In their view the *Gita* not only teaches *karma-yoga*, the way of action, but also *yuddha-yoga*, the way of conflict. But a little

thinking will show us how defective this argument is. Eighteen divisions of warriors were ready for battle. Are we to suppose that, by making Arjuna listen to the whole of the *Gita*, the Lord made him worthy of the army? It was Arjuna who quailed, not the army. Was the army then more worthy than Arjuna ? This is utterly inconceivable. It was not out of fear that Arjuna was turning away from the battle. He was a great warrior, who had proved his valour on a hundred fields. When Uttara's cattle were carried off he routed Bhishma, Drona and Karna single-handed. He was known as the undefeated, as the one true man among men. Heroism was in every drop of his blood, in the very marrow of his bones. In order to rouse his feeling and goad him to action, Krishna Himself attributed cowardice to him, but this missed the mark. Then He had to change His tactics and give a discourse on ultimate wisdom and immediate knowledge. So then it is clear that the aim of the *Gita* is not anything so easy and simple as removing cowardice.

Still others say that the *Gita* is meant to cure Arjuna of his scruples based on non-violence and make him inclined to fight. In my opinion this view also is not right. In order to examine this thoroughly, we have first to see the stand taken up by Arjuna. To do this, the First Chapter and its continuation in the Second will help us greatly.

Arjuna stood in the field of battle with his mind made up, and sustained by a sense of duty. Fighting, the calling of the Kshatriyas, was in his very nature. All possible attempts had been made to avoid war, but they had not succeeded. They had pitched their claims at the lowest, and Sri Krishna himself had tried to mediate ; but all in vain. In these circumstances he has got together the kings of many countries, taken Sri Krishna as his charioteer, and is standing on the battle-field. He says to Sri Krishna with heroic ardour : " Place my chariot between the two armies so that I can look

at the faces of the people who have come out ready to fight with me." Krishna did as he was told. What does Arjuna see when he turns his gaze in all directions ? On both sides are gathered a thick surging throng of his own kinsmen and friends. He sees grandfathers, fathers, sons and grandsons, four generations of his own people—family, friends and relations—finally determined to kill and be killed. It was not as though he had not expected this. But the actual experience strikes one with the force of a fresh impact.

When he sees all his own people gathered together, a storm begins to rage in his heart. He feels downcast. In the past, he had killed innumerable warriors in many a battle. But never till now had he felt so miserable, never had his bow, Gandiva, slipped from his hands, nor had his body quaked like this, nor his eyes become wet. Then, why did all this happen now ? Was he moved by the spirit of non-violence now, as Asoka was to be later ? No, this was only attachment to his own people. Even now, if those in front of him had not been his teachers, kinsmen and friends, he would have made their severed heads fly like so many balls. But his attachment confused him and overshadowed his devotion to duty ; it was then that he thought of philosophy. When a man with a sense of duty is caught in illusion, even then he cannot bear to face the naked fact of his lapse from duty. He usually covers it up with an enquiry into principles. Arjuna was just in this plight. He began to declare ostentatiously that war was really a sin, that war would destroy the race, maim *dharma*, encourage moral anarchy, spread antinomianism, disturb the seasons and bring many other disasters upon society. With such arguments he tried to enlighten Krishna Himself.

Here I am reminded of the story of a judge. He had sent hundreds of criminals to the gallows, but one day his own son was produced before him, accused of murder. His guilt

was proved beyond doubt ; the time had now come for the judge to pass sentence of death on his own son. But then he began to hesitate. He called all his ingenuity to his aid and began to argue thus : "The death penalty is most inhuman ; inflicting such punishment is no credit to man. All hope of reform is destroyed. The man who committed murder did so in the heat of excitement when he was beside himself. When the madness has passed from him, to take him coolly and calmly to the gallows and kill him is a disgrace to human society ; it is a great crime." He thought up many such arguments. If his own son had not been brought before him, the Hon'ble Judge would have gone on relentlessly condemning people to death for the rest of his life. But now, because of partiality for his own son, he argued thus. This was not the voice of his inmost self ; it was born of his attachment. "This is my son," he thought ; and from this sense of attachment sprang all these high-sounding words.

Arjuna's behaviour was like that of the judge in the story. The arguments advanced by him were not in themselves wrong. The whole world has seen precisely these consequences follow the last Great War. But what we should think about is this : that Arjuna had no real vision, it was only clever and superficial talk. All this Krishna knew. So, without paying any attention to Arjuna's words, he straightaway began to set about dispelling his illusion. If Arjuna had actually been converted to non-violence, he would never have been satisfied until his real point had been met, however much he was told about wisdom and knowledge. But the *Gita* has nowhere answered this point of his, and yet Arjuna was satisfied. The implication of all this is that Arjuna's attitude was not that of non-violence ; he did believe in fighting. As he saw it, fighting was his natural, clear and inescapable duty. But he wanted to evade this duty because

his vision was clouded by illusion. And it is on this illusion that the *Gita's* mace falls most heavily.

(3) The purpose of the Gita : to destroy Illusion

Arjuna used not merely the language of non-violence, but even that of *sannyasa*, complete renunciation. " Even a life of renunciation is better than this bloodstained *kshatriya dharma*," he says. But was this the way of life for him, his *svadharma* ? Was this the true expression of his nature ? Arjuna could have cheerfully donned the garb of a *sannyasi*, but how could he have lived the life ? If, in the name of *sannyasa*, he went into the forest, he would start killing the deer there. Therefore, the Lord told him plainly, " Arjuna, your present reluctance to fight is delusion. The nature that has become yours through the years will not permit you to refrain from fighting."

Arjuna felt at odds with his *svadharma*. But however unattractive a man's *svadharma* may be, he has to find fulfilment by persisting in it, because it is only through such persistence that growth is possible. There is no question of dignity involved here. This is the law of growth. *Svadharma* is not the sort of thing that one takes up because one thinks it is noble, or gives up because it seems lowly. In fact it is neither great nor small. It is equal to our measure. In the words of the *Gita*, " *sreyaan svadharmo vigunah* ". (" One's own *dharma*, even if devoid of merit, is the best for oneself.") The word " *dharma* " means not the organised religions, like Hindu-*dharma*, or Muslim-*dharma*, or Christian-*dharma*. Every individual has his own distinct *dharma*. The 200 people who are in front of me have 200 different *dharmas*. Even my own *dharma* today is not what it was ten years ago ; it will not be the same ten years hence. As the course of one's life changes through thinking and experience, one's old *dharma* drops off and a new *dharma*

comes in its place. One achieves nothing by self-willed obstinacy in this matter.

However superior another's *dharma* may appear to be, it is not good for me to adopt it. The light of the sun is dear to me. By this light I keep growing. The sun claims my worship too. But if, for this reason, I wish to give up living on the earth, and go to the sun, I would be burnt to ashes. On the other hand, even if living on earth is quite dull by comparison,—even if the earth is quite despicable when compared with the sun, even if it has to borrow its light—even then, so long as I lack the capacity to stand the sun's power, I shall have to stay away from the sun and keep growing on the earth. If someone were to say to a fish, " Milk is costlier than water ; come and live in this milk," would it agree ? Fish can only live in water ; they will die in milk.

Even if someone else's *dharma* seems easier, one should not take it up. Quite often, it only appears easier. If a man in household life is not able to look after his children properly and, getting disgusted, gives up the world, it will turn out to be hypocrisy and will even become burdensome. At the first opportunity, his old habits and associations will re-assert themselves. When a man goes into the forest because he is unable to bear life's burdens, the first thing he would do there is to build himself a small hut. Then, to protect it, he would put up a fence. Going on thus, he finds that there too he has to manage, if anything, a bigger household. If a man's mind is truly detached, surely renunciation is not difficult for him. There are many texts in the *Smrtis* which show how renunciation can be easy. It is really a question of one's vocation. One's *dharma* consists in following one's true vocation. The question is not whether it is high or low, easy or difficult. The growth must be real ; the evolution must be a genuine process.

But some imaginative people ask, " If *sannyasa*, the way of renunciation, is really always better than *yuddha dharma*, the way of conflict, why did Lord Krishna not make Arjuna a true *sannyasi* straightaway ? Was this impossible for *Him* ? " Of course, there was nothing that He could not do. But, in that case, what would be the meaning and purpose of Arjuna's life ? What does he achieve himself ? Almighty God has given us freedom. And so, let every man make his own efforts ; for that is where the fun lies. Children find joy in drawing pictures themselves. They do not like someone else holding their hand and drawing the picture for them. If the teacher gives the answers to all the questions put to the child, how is the child's mind to grow ? So the work of the teacher and the parents is only to make him attend, and help him with suggestions. God guides us all from within. He does no more than this. If, like a potter, He were to beat our clay and mould each of us into a pot, where is the sense in it ? We are not just pots of clay. We are the living consciousness.

From all this discussion, you would have understood that the purpose of the *Gita* is to remove the illusion that stands between us and our *svadharma*. Arjuna was perplexed about his *dharma ;* a delusion had arisen in his mind over his *svadharma*. As soon as Sri Krishna points this out, Arjuna himself admits it. The *Gita's* main task is to remove this illusion, this sense of " mine," this attachment. This is why, after Arjuna has listened to the whole of the *Gita*, Sri Krishna asks him, " Arjuna, you have got over the illusion, haven't you ? " And Arjuna replies " Yes, Lord. The illusion has left me ; my *svadharma* is clear to me." If then we put together the beginning and the end of the *Gita*, we see that its aim and effect is to remove illusion. This is true not only of the *Gita*, but of the whole of the *Mahabharata*. Vyasa said right at the beginning of the *Mahabharata*, " In

this epic, I am lighting a lamp to dispel the dark illusion that covers the heart of humanity."

(4) Who qualifies—the Pure of Heart

The introduction, which tells us about Arjuna's stand, has helped us greatly in understanding the rest of the *Gita*. We should of course feel grateful for this. But it helps us in another way too. In thus introducing Arjuna, the *Gita* reveals to us the innocence and straightforwardness of his mind. The word 'Arjuna' itself means one who is candid, straight and simple by nature. He opened out his heart and laid before the Lord all that he felt and thought. He kept nothing hidden and, in the end, he surrendered himself to Sri Krishna. But to tell the truth, he had surrendered himself even at the beginning. When he made Krishna his charioteer and entrusted to His hands the reins of his horses, even then, he had got ready to give into His hands the control of his mind and heart. Come, let us also do it. Let us not say, "Arjuna had Krishna. Where are we to find our Krishna ?" Let us not get caught in the fallacy of historicity, that there was an individual called "Krishna." Krishna shines in the heart of each of us, the Inner Ruler. He is nearer to us than the nearest. So then, let us place all the flaws and falsehoods of our heart before Him and say, "Oh Lord, I take refuge in you. You are my sole master, my *guru*. Show me the right way. I shall tread only the path you show." If we do so, He who drove Arjuna's chariot will drive ours too ; we ourselves shall hear the *Gita* in His own voice, and He will lead us to victory.

CHAPTER II

THE TEACHING IN BRIEF : SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND EQUANIMITY

(5) The special terminology of the Gita

Brothers, in the last Chapter we saw Arjuna's "*yoga* of despondency." When it is accompanied by innocence—honesty and simplicity—and surrender to God such as Arjuna's, even despondency becomes a *yoga*, a means of union with God. This is what is called "The Churning of the Heart." (Fire used to be kindled by churning wood with a stick, and butter is made by churning milk.) I have not called this stage "the *yoga* of Arjuna's despondency," with specific reference to Arjuna, the practitioner of the *yoga*, but I have given it the general name of "the *yoga* of despondency." Because, for the *Gita*, Arjuna is only the occasion. We should not think that the Lord Pandurang came down to Pandharpur in Maharashtra for the sake of Pundalik alone ; for we see that, using that opportunity, he has stood here for thousands of years now, in order to redeem us all, dull creatures as we are. In the same way, even though the immediate occasion for the *Gita's* compassion was Arjuna, it is really intended for all of us. Therefore, a general title like "*vishada yoga*," "the *yoga* of despondency," seems preferable for the First Chapter. The tree of the *Gita* springs as a sprout of the *yoga* of despondency and, after manifold growth, bears in the final chapter the fruit of "*prasada yoga*," "the *yoga* of grace." If God wills it, we too shall reach that stage during the term of our imprisonment.

The *Gita* begins its teaching in the Second Chapter ; and even at the very beginning, the Lord tells us the great truths of life. In doing so, his idea is that once the foundations of the edifice, the basic principles of life, are well laid, raising the superstructure becomes easy. I interpret the term

"*sankhya buddhi*" in the Second Chapter as the basic principles of life. We should now see what these fundamental principles are. But, before we do so, while discussing the word "*sankhya*," it would be useful if we clarify to ourselves the meanings of the technical words in the *Gita.*

The *Gita* has a way of using old philosophical terms in new senses. The evolution of thought takes place by the non-violent process of grafting new meanings on to old words. Vyasa is a good hand at this. That is why the words of the *Gita* have gained a wider meaning ; they have remained so fresh and green that thinkers could discover in them different meanings according to their own needs and experience. All these interpretations are possible, each from its own point of view, and, as I understand it, we can interpret the *Gita* for ourselves without having to contradict any of them.

There is a beautiful story in the *Upanishads* which is relevant here. Once the *devas* (bright gods), *danavas* (dark gods) and men, all three went to Prajapati (the Creator) for advice. Prajapati gave all three of them the same word of advice, the one syllable "*da.*" The bright gods said, "We *devas* are self-indulgent ; the taste for sensual pleasures has taken hold of us. So Brahma, by the sound '*da,*' has told us to acquire '*damana*' self-control." The dark gods said, "We *danavas* are now very prone to anger, and hard-hearted ; the Creator has advised us, by the sound '*da,*' to cultivate '*daya*' compassion." The men said, "We men are given to greed, and have become mad after piling up wealth ; by saying '*da*', Prajapati has advised us to practise '*dana,*' giving of gifts." The Creator approved of all their interpretations, because they had each arrived at their meaning in terms of their own experience. While understanding the technical terms of the *Gita,* we should bear in mind this story from the *Upanishads.*

(6) The purpose of life : using the body for Svadharma

In the Second Chapter, three great truths are declared. First, that the spirit is deathless and indivisible. Secondly, that the body is transient. Thirdly, that *svadharma* cannot be thrust aside. Of these, *svadharma* is in the nature of a duty to be performed ; the other two have to be known and realised. In the First Chapter, I have already said something about *svadharma*. This *svadharma* comes to one naturally. One does not have to go out in search of one's own *dharma*. It is not as if we have dropped down from the sky and started walking on the earth. Before we were born, our society existed, our parents existed, our neighbours existed. We are born into this stream of existence. To serve the parents who gave me life becomes my duty from birth ; so too, the duty of serving the society into which I am born. The truth is that, as we are born, our *svadharma* is also born with us. But we can also say that it is there waiting for us even before we are born ; for it is the purpose of our being born. We are born to fulfil it. Some people say that *svadharma* is like one's wife; just as the marriage-bond is considered indissoluble, the bond of *svadharma* also cannot be broken. But even this comparison does not seem to me to go to the heart of the matter; it is only the second best. I would compare *svadharma* to one's mother. It was not left to me to choose my mother in this birth. It had already been determined for me. No matter what sort of person she is, there is no pushing her away. That is precisely the case with *svadharma*—it is inescapable. Besides *svadharma*, we have nothing else in all this world to rely on, to rest in. To disown one's *svadharma* is to disown oneself, to commit suicide. Only with its help can we move forward. That is why no one should ever let go his hold on *svadharma*. This basic truth has been firmly established.

Our *svadharma* comes to us with such ease and naturalness that we should cherish it without effort. But because of many

kinds of illusion, this does not happen ; or else, it is performed with great difficulty ; or even if it is practised, it gets corrupted with many sorts of faults. There are many external forms assumed by the illusion which strews with thorns the path of *svadharma.* Yet, if we examine them, only one thing is at the bottom of it all, namely, a restricted and shallow identification of oneself with the body. Myself, and those related to me through the body, set the limits of my expansion. Anyone outside this circle is to me a stranger or an enemy. This identification with the body builds a wall around me and cuts me off ; and the odd thing about it is that I regard only the bodies as " me " and " mine." Falling into this double trap of identification of oneself and one's people with the body, we start putting up all sorts of little walls. Almost everybody is busy doing this. Of these enclosures, one man's is larger, and another's smaller ; but, after all, every one of them is a wall. And it is no thicker than his skin. One man puts up an enclosure called " attachment to family " and lives in it ; another builds and lives in an enclosure called " attachment to nation." One wall divides Brahmans and Non-brahmans, another divides Hindus and Muslims. In this way, not one or two, but many such walls have been built. Wherever you turn, you see nothing but walls. Even inside this jail of ours, we have political and non-political prisoners, as if we could not live without these walls within walls. But what is the result of this ? Only one thing : the wretched germs of disease multiply, and the health which is *svadharma* is destroyed.

(7) The purpose of life : awareness of the Self that transcends the body

In this situation, it is not enough to perform one's *svadharma* with determination. Something more is required ; it is necessary to be awake to two other principles also. One is : " I am not this mortal body ; the body is only the outer

covering." The other is : "I am the spirit that never dies, that cannot be cut up, that pervades everything." When these two principles are combined, one attains the perfect truth.

The *Gita* considers a knowledge of this truth so essential that it invokes this truth first, and brings in *svadharma* only later. Some people wonder why these verses about the ultimate truth occur in the very beginning. But to me it seems that if there are any verses at all in the *Gita* whose position can never be changed, it is these.

If this much knowledge is stamped on our mind, then *svadharma* will not seem hard to us. Not only that, but anything not *svadharma* will seem hard. It is not at all difficult to realise the indestructibility of spirit and the transience of the body, because both these are true and real. But then, we have to reflect upon them. We should turn them round and round in our minds. We should train ourselves to belittle the body and exalt the spirit.

Look, this body changes every instant. Who is not caught in the cycle of childhood, youth and old age ? Modern scientists say that in seven years the whole body changes, and that not even a drop of the old blood remains. Our ancestors believed that the old body dies in twelve years. That is why they fixed the period for atonement (*prayaschitta*) or penance (*tapascharya*) or study (*adhyayana*) as twelve years. We hear stories of how a son meets his mother after many years of separation, and the mother cannot recognise him. This body that changes every moment, dies every moment, is this your true form ? Night and day, the sewers of your body keep flowing, and even in spite of your indefatigable scavenging it never gives up its uncleanliness ; is this body *you* ? It is unclean ; it is you who wash it. It is sickly ; it is you that treat it with medicine and water. It fills three and a half cubits of space ; you sport in the three worlds. It is liable to endless changes ; you witness these changes. It is liable

to death ; and you ordain it. When the distinction between it and you is so clear, why do you shrink into such smallness ? Why do you say that only that which is related to your body belongs to you ? And why grieve so much for the death of the body ? The Lord asks, " My friend, is the destruction of the body a cause for grief ?"

The body is like one's clothes. When the old clothes wear out, we go in for new ones. If one body were to stick for ever to the soul, the soul would be in a sad plight ; it would stop growing, its joy would vanish, and the light of its knowledge would become dim. That is why the destruction of the body cannot be something to grieve over. Yes, if the soul could be destroyed, that certainly would be something to grieve over. But the spirit is indestructible ; it is an unbroken, everflowing stream. Many bodies settle on it for a while and then disappear. That is why it is all wrong to get caught in the circle of the body's relations and to suffer with divisions and distinctions, saying ," These belong to me ; those belong to others." Look, this whole universe is like a lovely shawl ; and a little boy takes a pair of scissors and cuts it up into pieces. What childish and violent folly to use the body as a pair of scissors with which to cut up the universal spirit !

Really, it is matter for great sorrow, that in India, where knowledge of the eternal reality (*brahma-vidya*) was born, we can now see so many parties big and small, besides factions and castes, on every side. And in our hearts lurks so much fear of death that one wonders whether there is any other place like this where people once conquered death but are now afraid of it. There is no doubt that this is a result of long subjection, but one should not forget that it is also a cause of that subjection.

Even the word " death " we cannot bear to hear. To mention death seems inauspicious to us. Jnanadev had to say

with great sorrow : "The word death they cannot bear ; they weep when someone dies." And if someone dies, what lamentation, what loud outcry ! Why, we think all this is a duty ! We even go further and hire professional mourners to do the weeping for us. Even when death approaches, we do not tell the patient of it. Even if the physician has told us that the patient cannot live, we would still keep him in the dark about it. The doctor himself does not speak plainly ; he empties bottles of medicine into him so long as there is breath in the body. If instead he were to tell the truth, give him the comfort of courage, and direct his thoughts towards God, what a real help it would be ! But their fear is that under the shock this brittle pot might crack before its time. But really, could this pot crack before the ordained moment ? And besides, if this pot that was due to crack two hours hence should crack right now, what difference does it make ? All this does not mean that one should become hard-hearted or loveless. But attachment to the body is not love. On the contrary, unless attachment to the body is put away, true love does not begin.

When attachment to the body goes, then one realises that the body is an instrument for service ; and then the body also finds its real support and receives the honour due to it. But today we regard pampering the body as the sole purpose of our lives. We have forgotten that life is to be lived for the fulfilment of *svadharma.* One has to foster and cherish the body because only so can one perform one's *svadharma.* The need is not just to satisfy the cravings of the palate. It is all the same to the spoon whether you serve *halva* with it, or rice and *dal.* It doesn't feel pleased in the one case or dissatisfied in the other. The tongue too should be in the same happy position—it should, of course, have taste, but no pleasure or pain from it. The body is to be paid its due hire—no more than that. We have to use the *charkha* for spinning,

so it is necessary to oil it. In the same way, we get work out of the body, and we have to give it fuel. If we were to use it in this way, the body, though it is nothing in itself, can gain value and find its roots in the spirit. But instead of using the body as an instrument, we lose ourselves in it, and stunt our spirit. Thus the body, which already was of little intrinsic value, becomes even more worthless. That is why the saints say firmly, "It is wrong to be attached to the body and those related through the body; dogs and pigs too are worthy of affection. This body and those related to you through this body—do not worship these alone, day and night, my friend. Learn to recognise others too as belonging to you." The saints teach us thus to grow. Do we ever take anything of ourselves to anyone not a close relation or friend ? Do we ever do anything "to mingle soul with soul, to make self meet self ?" Do we let the swan of the spirit go outside this cage and breathe free air ? Does it ever occur to you to break through your accepted circle and say to yourself, "I will make ten new friends tomorrow ?" Making fifteen friends today and fifty tomorrow, shall I one day feel that the whole world belongs to me, and I to the world ? We write letters to our relations from the jail ; what is there so wonderful about that ? But would we write to a new friend released from prison—not a political prisoner, but a thief ?

The self is impatient to pervade the world. It wants to gobble up all creation. But we shut it up in a cell. We have made a prisoner of it. We do not even remember that it exists. From morning till evening we are busy minding the body. Day and night we worry about how fat or how thin our bodies have become. One would think that there was no other joy in the world. Even beasts experience the pleasures of sense. Will you not now taste the joy of giving away and of controlling the palate ? What joy there is in giving away a full plate of food to a hungry man, though you too suffer

from hunger ! Taste the joy of this experience. when she bears suffering for the sake of her child, thing of this joy. Even when a man draws a and calls it " his own," the unconscious aim is to ... ıne joy of growth in the self ; for thereby, the self bound in the body comes out for a little while. But what sort of release is this ? It is like the prisoner coming out of his cell into the courtyard. But this is not enough for the spirit. The spirit wants the joy of unbounded freedom.

The essence of the matter is :—(1) The seeker after perfection (*sadhaka*) needs to leave the crooked ways of *adharma* (what is not one's dharma) and *paradharma* (someone else's *dharma*) and take the natural easy path of *svadharma* ; he should never let go the motherly security of *svadharma.* (2) The body perishes every moment; understanding this, let him use it for the sake of *svadharma.* When there is need, let him not hesitate even to give it up for the sake of *svadharma.* (3) Let him be constantly aware that the self is indestructible, all-pervasive ; and let him remove from his heart the distinction of " mine " and " thine." The Lord tells us these basic principles of living. The man who walks in the way shown by the Lord will one day, without doubt, experience " through this human body itself the blissful state of *sat-chit-ananda.*"

(8) How to achieve both : Renunciation of fruit

The Lord has indeed told us the truths of life, but the work is not complete with the mere telling. These principles enunciated in the *Gita* are found already in the *Upanishads* and *Smrtis.* If the *Gita* merely repeated them, it would be no great distinction. Its real merit is that it tells us how to bring these truths into practice. It is in solving this great problem that the skill of the *Gita* consists.

" *Yoga* " is the name of the art or process by which these principles can be put into practice in the actual living. The word " *sankhya* " means principles or theory. " *Yoga* "

means art or well-doing. Jnanadev bears witness : "The art of living comes of itself to the *Yogis*." The *Gita* is full of both, *sankhya* and *yoga*, science and art, *sastra* and *kalaa*. When science and art meet, life blossoms into beauty. Mere science is a castle in the air. One may understand the theory of music, but if one has not trained the voice and mastered the art of singing, then *nadabrahman* (God as sound) would not take shape for us. That is the reason why the Lord has taught not only the principles, but also the art of applying them. What then is this art ? What is the art which enables one to realise the transience of the body and the indestructibility and wholeness of the spirit, and so to practise *svadharma* ?

Behind a man's action there are generally two types of attitude. One is the assured feeling, "I shall enjoy the fruit of my action. I have a right to it." On the contrary, there is a feeling, "If I am not to enjoy the fruit of my action, then I will not act at all." The *Gita* tells us of yet another attitude of mind or way of life, which says, "You must of course act, but don't think that you have a right to the fruit." The man who acts has no doubt a right to the fruit. But give up this right of your own free will. *Rajas* says, "If I accept the work, I demand the fruit." *Tamas* says, "If I give up the fruit, I shall give up the work also." These two attitudes are like two brothers. Therefore leave both behind and reach pure *sattvaguna*. In other words, do the work, but give up the fruit ; and giving up the fruit, do the work. Before, or after, do not hanker after the fruit.

"Don't hanker after the fruit," says the *Gita*. But it also insists that you should act with full energy and skill. The action of the person who acts without desire should be much better than that of the person who acts with desire. This is only proper ; for the latter is attracted to the fruit, and a part, much or little, of his time and attention will be spent

on thoughts and dreams of the fruit. But all the time and all the strength of the man who has no desire for the fruit is devoted to the action. The river takes no rest, the wind knows no fatigue, and the sun can only shine and shine for ever. The disinterested doer, too, cannot but render unremitting service. What action then can equal that of the man who thus always rejoices in action ? Also, balance of mind is itself a most noble quality, and this, one might say, is the patrimony of the disinterested doer. If, in a work of art, besides dexterity and skill of hand, there is also mental poise, we see in it a greater beauty.

Moreover, the difference between the disinterested worker and the worker with attachment is all to the advantage of the former. The man of desires looks at an act with the eye of self-interest : " The act is mine, and the fruit too is mine." Because of this, it does not appear to him a moral lapse if his attention strays a little from the work. At most, it seems to him an error in execution. But the worker without desire for the fruit feels in relation to his work a sense of moral duty. So with concentration, he takes care that there is no shortcoming in his work. His work is more flawless. However you look at it, renunciation of fruit is the most effective and noble principle. And so we may say that renunciation of fruit is *yoga*, the art of living.

Leaving aside the matter of desireless action, there is in action a joy which you cannot find in the fruit. While performing an action for its own sake, one's absorption in it is itself a stream of joy. If you said to an artist, " Don't paint pictures ; I shall pay you for not painting," he would not agree. If you said to the farmer, " Don't go out into the fields, or graze your cattle, or lift water from your wells ; we will give you as much grain as you ask for," if he were a true farmer, he wouldn't like this arrangement. The farmer goes into his fields early in the morning. *Suryanarayana* (God

as the sun) welcomes him. The birds sing for him. The cattle crowd around him. He strokes their backs with affection. He looks with loving eyes on the plants and trees that he has raised. There is a pure, a *sattvik*, joy in these actions. And this joy itself is the foremost, the real fruit of action. Weighed against this, the outer, the material fruit is quite secondary.

By taking man's attention away from the fruit, the *Gita* multiplies a hundredfold his concentration on his work. The disinterested worker's concentration on his work is itself a kind of *samadhi* (an experience of oneness). It follows that his joy is many times greater than that of others. If we look at it this way, it becomes at once clear that desireless action is itself a great reward. Does not Jnanadev ask, " The tree yields fruit. Would you have the fruit yield further fruit?" When this body, like a tree, has brought forth the beautiful fruit of disinterested pursuit of *svadharma*, why look for any other fruit? Why should the farmer who has sown wheat, sell it and eat bread of millets ? Why grow bananas and, selling the fruit, buy chillies instead ? Eat what you sow, my brother. But the world does not accept all this. Though they have the good fortune to be able to live on bananas, they fling themselves on the chillies. The *Gita* says, " Don't do this ; but eat action itself, drink action itself, digest action itself." Everything else comes with performance of action. A child plays for the joy of playing. The benefit of exercise comes of its own accord. But the child does not think of this benefit. All his joy is in the playing.

(9) Renunciation of fruit : two examples

This joy in action, saints have illustrated in their lives. Sivaji the king had great regard for Saint Tukaram. Once he sent a palanquin to fetch Tukaram and made arrangements to receive him with honour. But Tukaram was deeply distressed by these preparations. He thought to himself, " Is

this the reward for my devotion ? Is it for this that I worship God ?" It seemed to him as if the Lord, by placing this fruit of worldly honour in his hands, was pushing him away. He said :

> " You know my heart ; do you wish to get rid of this trouble from me ? Wicked is this trick of yours, Pandurang ! "

" My Lord, this plan of yours is far from good. You are trying to put me away with a little red bead. You perhaps think you can get rid of the bother in this way. But, after all, I am not the disciple of such a poor teacher. I shall cling to your feet and never let go. Devotion is the *svadharma* of the devotee ; and the art of his life is to see that the tree of devotion does not put forth branches bearing other fruit."

The life of Pundalik shows us an even more profound ideal of renunciation. Pundalik looked after his parents and served them. Being pleased with such service, the Lord Pandurang came running to greet him. But Pundalik would not be beguiled by Pandurang, and refused to give up his duty of service. Serving his father and mother was for him worship of God, true *bhakti.* If a boy were to rob others and cherish his parents, or a patriot to be treacherous to other nations in his country's interests, the devotion of either could not be called *bhakti.* It would be mere attachment. Pundalik was not caught up in any such attachment to a form. He thought to himself : " This form that God has taken when he stands before me—is God only this ? Was creation a corpse before He appeared in this form ?" He said to God, " Lord, you have come yourself to bless me with this vision. This I understand. But I believe in the doctrine of ' AND ALSO.' I cannot accept that you alone are God. To me, you are God. AND my parents too are God. Since I am engaged in their service, I am unable to give you my attention. Please

forgive me." So he pushed towards the Lord a brick for Him to stand on, and became absorbed again in his service to his parents. Tukaram has taken up this occasion and says with great enthusiasm and wonder :

" What mad love is this, that kept Vitthal waiting,
What brave folly to push a brick for Him to stand on !"

This doctrine of " AND " which Pundalik applied is part of the technique used for renunciation of fruit. If the absorption in work (*karma-samadhi*) of the man who has renounced the fruit of action is deep, his outlook on life (*vrtti*) is broad, inclusive and balanced. For this reason, he never falls into the tangle of conflicting philosophies, nor does he let go his own principles. He does not raise controversies like those the Gita talks of—" *Naanyadastiiti vaadinah* "—" Those who say that nothing else is," and " Only this exists—there is no other." On the other hand, his humble but firm attitude is : " This is true, AND that too is true. But, for me, this is true."

Once a householder went to a *sadhu* and asked him, " In order to attain freedom (*moksha*), is it necessary to renounce the home ?" The *sadhu* said, " Surely not. Look, since men like Janaka have lived in palaces and found freedom (*moksha*), where is the need for you to leave the home ?" Later, another man came and asked the *sadhu*, " Swamiji, can one attain *moksha* without leaving the home ?" Now the *sadhu* replied, " Whoever said so ? If one could stay at home and get *moksha*, were Suka and others, then, fools to renounce their homes ?" When later these two men met, a loud dispute arose. One asserted, " The *sadhu* says we must renounce our homes." The other protested, " No, he says that it is unnecessary." Then both came to the *sadhu*, who said, " You are both right. The way is in accord with the attitude of mind ; the answer follows the question. One should leave one's home ; one need not leave one's home—both are true." This is the doctrine of " AND ALSO."

From the example of Pundalik one can understand how far the renunciation of fruit can take one. The temptation before Pundalik (the vision of the Lord) was much more subtle than the material temptation offered to Tukaram. But he was not taken in even by that. If he had been, he would have been lost. So then, once one's way has been chosen, it should be pursued to the end, even if the vision of the Lord crosses the path. The body exists for the fulfilment of a purpose. The vision of God is always in our grasp ; how could it escape us ?

" When my heart is steeped in the love of you, who now can take away from me the sense of oneness with all ?"

It is to attain such love (*bhakti*) that one is born. When the *Gita* says, " *maa te sango astu akarmani* " (Do not be attached to inaction), the meaning of this extends thus far, that while you act you must not retain even the *vasana* of *moksha*, the attachment to liberation or ultimate freedom from action. Freedom from *vasana* is itself *moksha*. What truck can *moksha* have with *vasana* ? When renunciation of fruit reaches this point, then the art of life has attained completeness and perfection, and shines like the full moon.

(10) The Ideal Teacher

The *sastra* and the *kalaa*, the science and the art, have both been expounded—but even after this, the whole picture does not stand clearly before our eyes. Science is absolute and unqualified, art has quality; *sastra* is *nirguna*, *kalaa* is *saguna*. But even a quality does not manifest itself to the eye, unless it assumes a form. The *saguna*, if it is not given a form, may be as elusive as the absolute. The way out of this difficulty is to behold the man in whom the quality has taken shape. This is why Arjuna says, " Lord, you have taught me the most important truths of life, and the art by which these can be brought into practice. But the picture is not yet clear. Will you not now illustrate them and show them in action ?

Tell me the marks by which one can know the man whose mind holds fast these principles, and whose every pulse spells out the *yoga* of renunciation. Tell me about him whom we call the *sthitaprajna* (the steadfast seer), who shows us the profound depths of renunciation, who is absorbed in oneness with action (*karma-samadhi*), who is in firmness like the great Mount Meru. How does he speak, how does he sit, how does he walk ? What does he look like, how can one recognise him ? Will you not tell me all this, my Lord ?"

It is in answer to this entreaty that at the end of the Second Chapter, the Lord has drawn for us in eighteen *slokas* the heroic and sublime character of the *sthitaprajna.* In these eighteen *slokas* he has distilled the essence of the eighteen chapters of the *Gita.* The *sthitaprajna* is the ideal character of the *Gita.* Even the phrase *sthitaprajna* is the *Gita's* own. Later, the *Gita* describes other figures in the same way— the *jivan-mukta* (the liberated one) in the Fifth Chapter, the *bhakta* (the devotee) in the Twelfth, the *gunatita* (one who has transcended differences) in the Fourteenth, and the *jnananishtha* (one steadfast in *jnana*) in the Eighteenth. But the description of the *sthitaprajna* is more detailed and revealing than the others. Here, side by side with the marks of the *siddha,* the perfect one, we are also told of the qualities of the *sadhaka,* the seeker after perfection. Thousands of satyagrahis, men and women, recount these qualities in their evening prayers. If they could reach every village and every house, what a happy thing it would be : but, assuredly, if they dwell in our hearts they would, of their own accord, spread outwards. If what we recite every day becomes mechanical repetition, then instead of impressing itself on the mind, it will fade out. This, however, is not the fault of constant repetition, but of not thinking about it. Along with constant repetition, constant meditation and self-examination are necessary.

The *sthitaprajna* is the man of steadfast mind—the very name proclaims it. But how can the mind be steadfast without self-control ? So the *sthitaprajna* is said to be the embodiment of self-control. The mind being fixed in the self (*atman*) and controlling the *indriyas* (the organs of perception and action)—this is self-control. The *sthitaprajna* reins in the *indriyas* and guides them into *karma-yoga*, the way of action. To vary the image, using his *indriyas* as oxen, he ploughs well and cultivates the field of the disinterested performance of *svadharma*. Every breath of his is used in this higher pursuit.

This control of the *indriyas* is not easy. Perhaps, in a way, it might be easy not to use one's *indriyas* at all. Silence and fasting are not so difficult. The opposite, to leave one's *indriyas* free, of course comes easy to everybody. But to do as the tortoise does, drawing in its limbs in times of danger, and using them when it is safe, to draw the senses away from objects, and to use them aright for higher services—this discipline is difficult. For this, great effort and much wisdom are needed. Even with all this, it is doubtful whether we shall reach the goal. Are we then to despair ? No, the *sadhaka* (the seeker after perfection) should never lose hope. If, after trying all the techniques of his *sadhana*, something is still lacking then let him call in faith, *bhakti*. The Lord has given us this very valuable advice in the course of his picture of the *sthitaprajna*. Yes, he has given it in a few picked words. But these few words are more valuable than cartloads of explanation, for *bhakti* has been brought in when the need for it is greatest. We shall not here go into the qualities of the *sthitaprajna* in detail. But I draw attention to it now, lest we should forget the essential place assigned to *bhakti* in all our *sadhana*. Only God knows who in this world is a perfect *sthitaprajna* ; but the figure of Pundalik always comes before my eyes as the example of the *sthitaprajna* who is

utterly given over to service—and that I have placed before you.

Well, now the qualities of the *sthitaprajna* are complete, and the Second Chapter is over.

Nirguna	+	*Saguna*	+	The embodiment
(Theory)		(Art and practice)		(The steadfast seer)
(*Sankhyabuddhi*)		(*Yogabuddhi*)		(*Sthitaprajna*)

together
complete the science
of life

What other fruit but *brahma-nirvana*, Liberation, can this tree yield ?

CHAPTER III

THE YOGA OF ACTION

(11) The infinite gains of renunciation of fruit

Brothers, in the Second Chapter, we glanced over the whole of the philosophy of life. Now, in the Third Chapter, we shall explain this philosophy more clearly. We began by considering principles ; now we shall go into detail. In the previous Chapter we discussed *karma-yoga* (the way of action). The great thing in *karma-yoga* is giving up the fruit of one's actions. Yes, in *karma-yoga* one surrenders the fruit ; but the question arises : Does the fruit come to one, nevertheless, or does it not ? Thus the Third Chapter says that the *karma-yogi*, by giving up the fruit of his action, does not lose it, but paradoxically enough gains it in infinite measure.

Here one is reminded of the story of Lakshmi (the goddess of prosperity). It was her *svayamvara* (the day when she was to choose her husband). All the *devas* and *danavas* had come with hopes raised high ; Lakshmi had not proclaimed her vow before. She came into the assembly and said, " I shall garland only the man who has no desire for me." But then, they were all greedy people. So Lakshmi began to search for the desireless one whom she could choose. Now there appeared before her the form of Lord Vishnu lying peacefully on the serpent, Sesha. She put the wedding garland round His neck and to this day she sits there, stroking His feet. *Ramaa* (the goddess of beauty) becomes the slave of him who does not hanker after her. That is the wonder of it.

The ordinary man puts up a bristling hedge around his fruits ; but by doing so, he loses the infinite fruit that should have been his. The worldly man, after endless toil, receives a small reward ; but the *karma-yogi*, though he may do little, receives immense benefit. The difference is due only to a

bhavana (an inward attitude). Tolstoy says somewhere : People talk a lot about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ ; but no one knows how much the worldly man runs about every day of his life and grows dry within ! He carries on his back the burden of two donkeys and capers about. Is not his suffering much greater, his plight far worse, than Jesus Christ's ?

The worldly people also do much penance ; but it is in pursuit of low aims. We reap what we sow ; as is the desire, so is the fruit. The world will not pay more for our wares than the price we ourselves mark on them. Sudama went to the Lord Krishna with a gift of flattened rice. The handful of rice may not be worth even a pie, but to Sudama it seemed beyond price, for his devotion went with it. It was charmed rice. Every grain of it was charged with his love. However cheap a thing may be, the *mantra*, the charm, increases its value, its power. What, after all, is the weight of a currency note ? If we burn it, we might, perhaps, be able to warm a drop of water. But the stamp on it gives it its value.

This is the whole beauty of *karma-yoga* also. Action is like the currency note. Its value is that of the *bhavana* (the feeling behind it), the stamp it bears, not that of the *karma* or outward action, the piece of paper. In a way, what I am telling you is the secret of image-worship itself. There is great beauty in the idea of worshipping an image. Who can break this image ? This image, in the beginning, was merely a piece of stone. I put life into it. I filled it with my *bhavana*, my feeling. How can anyone destroy my feeling ? Stones can be smashed, but not feelings. When I withdraw my feelings from the image, then what remains will be mere stone ; a thing which anyone can break to pieces.

In other words, then, action is a piece of stone, or a piece of paper. My mother scribbled three or four lines on a piece of paper and sent it off to me ; another gentleman sent me a long discursive fifty-page letter. Now, which is more weighty ? But the feeling in my mother's few lines is beyond measure ; it is sacred. The other stuff cannot stand comparison with it. Action must be moistened with love, filled with feeling (*bhavana*). We set a price on the labourer's work, and pay him his due wages. But a ritual gift (*dakshina*) is not given like that. One sprinkles water on the *dakshina*, before giving it away.

Here, one does not ask how much is given. The important question is whether it was moistened or not,—whether there was love in it or not. There is an entertaining passage in the *Manusmrti*. A student lived twelve years in his Master's house. He went there an animal, and came out a man. Now what fee was he to give his Master ? In olden days, the fees were not collected in advance. After studying for twelve years, one gave the teacher what was proper. Manu says, " Give the Master one or two leaves and flowers, a fan or a pair of sandals, or a water-pot." Don't think this is a joke ; for whatever is to be given, should be given with the knowledge that it is a symbol of faith. What, after all, is the weight of a flower ? But in the eyes of devotion, it is equal to all creation. " With a single leaf of *tulasi*, Rukmini weighed Giridhar, the Lord who lifted up a mountain." Satyabhama's ponderous jewellery was of no avail. But when mother Rukmini laid a *tulasi* leaf, filled with devotion, on the scale, the thing was done. The *tulasi* leaf was charged with magic. It was no longer a common leaf. This is true of the action of the *karma-yogi* too.

Suppose two men go for a bath in the Ganga. One of them says, " What is this Ganga that people talk so much about ? Take two parts of hydrogen and one of oxygen ;

combine the two gases—it becomes Ganga. What else is there in the Ganga ?" The other says, "The Ganga flows from the lovely lotus-feet of Lord Vishnu. She has dwelt in the matted hair of Siva. Thousands of seers, both ascetic and kingly, have done penance near her. Countless holy acts have been performed by her side. Such is the sacred Ganga, my mother." Filled with this *bhavana* (feeling), he bathes in the river. The oxygen-hydrogen-wallah also bathes. Both derive the benefit of physical cleansing. But the devotee (*bhakta*) gets the benefit of mental purification as well. Even a buffalo, if it bathes in the Ganga, will achieve physical cleanliness. The dirt of the body will go. But how wash the mind of its taint ? One got the slight benefit of physical cleanliness ; the other, in addition, gained the invaluable fruit of inward purity.

When, after bathing, a man performs *Suryanamaskar* (a strenuous form of Sun worship), he will, of course, get the benefit of physical exercise. It is not for the sake of bodily health that he performs *Suryanamaskar*, but he does it as worship (*upasana*). Of course he gains good health, but the brightness of his intellect also increases. While he grows healthier, God as the Sun (*Suryanarayan*) also grants him greater awareness and imaginative power.

The action is the same ; but a distinction arises from the difference in *bhavana* (in the inward attitude). The action of the man who seeks spiritual good opens out the soul ; the action of the worldly man serves to bind it. If the *karma-yogi* is a farmer, he will till the land, considering it his *svadharma*. His stomach will of course be filled ; but he does not work for filling his stomach. He looks upon food as a means by which he keeps his body fit for the task of tilling the land. The end is *svadharma* and food is the means. But to the farmer who is not a *karma-yogi*, filling his stomach is the end, and his *svadharma*, farming,

is the means. The two attitudes are thus opposed to each other.

In describing the qualities of the *sthitaprajna* (the steadfast seer) in the Second Chapter, this distinction has been brought out in a striking way. When others are awake, the *karma-yogi* is asleep ; and when others are asleep, the *karma-yogi* is awake. Just as we take good care to keep our stomach filled, the *karma-yogi* is watchful lest even one moment should slip past without action. If he too eats, it is out of necessity. Because there is no help for it, he puts some food into his stomach. The worldly man finds joy in eating ; the *yogi* finds it a hardship. So he does not take pleasure in every morsel, as he tastes it. He eats with self-restraint. The night of the one is the day of the other ; and the day of the one is the night of the other. In other words, the thing in which one finds joy, in it the other finds pain, and *vice versa.* Though the actions of the worldly man and the *karma-yogi* look alike, the *karma-yogi's* distinction is that he has given up attachment to the fruit of his action, and finds joy in the action itself. The *yogi,* like the worldly man, eats, drinks, sleeps. But his *bhavana,* his attitude to these actions, is different. That is why, though there are sixteen chapters of the *Gita* left, still, at the very beginning, the figure of the steadfast seer, the *sthitaprajna,* the embodiment of self-control, is placed before us.

The similarity and the difference between the actions of the worldly man and those of the *karma-yogi* are immediately apparent. Suppose the *karma-yogi* is engaged in the care of cows. With what outlook does he do it ? His *bhavana* (attitude) is that, by his service to the cows, society will get its fill of milk ; and that, through the cow, he will forge for himself a link of love with the lower orders of creation. He does not do it for his wages. The wages come to him all right ;

but the real joy and pleasure are in this pure *bhavana*, this spiritual outlook.

The *karma-yogi's* action unites him with all creation. If we will not eat without first watering the *tulasi* plant, we create, by this resolve, a bond of love between ourselves and the vegetable kingdom. How can I eat, while leaving the *tulasi* hungry ? Learning in this way to identify ourselves with the cow and the *tulasi*, we must attain oneness with the whole universe. In the Mahabharata war, everybody, at sunset, leaves the field for evening prayer, but Lord Krishna unyokes the horses from the chariot, gives them water, rubs them down, removes the burrs from their bodies. What joy the Lord finds in this service! In describing this, the poet knows no weariness. Picture it to yourself. The Lord Parthasarathi (the Lord as Arjuna's charioteer) feeds the horses from his yellow silk (*pitambar*), which he has filled with gram. And thus you will experience in imagination the joy of *karma-yoga.* Take it that every act is a noble, spiritual, consecrated act. Take khadi work itself. Does the man who hawks khadi in the streets, with a bundle on his back, never get tired ? No, because he is absorbed in the thought that he has to feed the millions of his brothers and sisters in this country who are naked and starving. Selling this yard of khadi makes him one with *Daridra-narayana* (God in the form of the poor).

(12) Varied benefits of karma-yoga

In the *yoga* of desireless action, there is a miraculous power. By such action, both the individual and society are richly blessed. The life of the man who follows his *svadharma* runs the even tenor of its course. But, because he is always absorbed in action, his body keeps pure and healthy. And, as a result of his action, the society in which he lives prospers too. The *karma-yogi* farmer will not cultivate opium or tobacco just because it will fetch a lot of money, for he has

related his work to the welfare of society. Action done as *svadharma* confers nothing but benefit on the community. The trader who believes that his business is for the good of society will never deal in foreign fineries. His business advances the welfare of society. The *karma-yogi* forgets himself and lives in identity with the community around him. Any society into which such *karma-yogis* are born will maintain order, prosperity and goodwill.

The result of the *karma-yogi's* action is that while his life goes on smoothly, his body and mind are radiant ; and society too prospers. Besides these two benefits, he also receives the great gift of *chitta-suddhi*, purity of mind. " Purity through action," it is called. Action is a means to inward purity ; but not the routine action of everybody. What brings about inward purity is the " charged " action of the *karma-yogi*. The *Mahabharata* tells the story of the merchant Tuladhar (the balance-holder). A *brahman* called Jajali goes to him to find true knowledge. Tuladhar says to him, " Brother, it is necessary to keep the beam of this balance always even." By constantly doing this external action, Tuladhar's mind too had become straight and sensitive. Whether a child comes into the shop, or a grown-up person, his beam remains level for all, leaning neither this way nor that. One's action transforms one's mind. The *karma-yogi's* work is a form of prayer (*japa*). His mind is purified by it, and the clear mind receives the image of *jnana*, true knowledge. Through his many separate actions, the *karma-yogi*, in the end, attains true knowledge. From the arm of the balance Tuladhar got mental poise. As Sena, the barber, cleaned other people's heads, wisdom came to him. " Look, I remove the dirt from others' heads, but have I ever removed the dirt from my own head, from my own mind ? " The language of the spirit came to him through his work. As he weeds his field, the *karma-yogi*

gets the idea of removing the weeds of habit and passion from his heart. Gora the potter kneads and moulds the raw clay and gives baked pots to the people ; from this he learns the lesson that his own life too is a pot that needs to be baked. He can test with his fingers if a pot is baked or raw ; he thus becomes a judge of saintliness. From this it is evident that the *karma-yogi*, through the terms of his own trade or occupation, gains knowledge of perfection. What was their trade but a school of the spirit ? These actions of theirs were nothing but worship, nothing but service. Viewed from without, these actions looked worldly, but inwardly, in reality, they were spiritual.

Another great benefit flows from the actions of the *karma-yogi* : Society has before it an ideal. In a community, it happens that one man is born before and another after. It becomes the responsibility of the one who was born earlier to set an example to those who come later. It is the responsibility of the elder brother to the younger brother, of the parent to the children, of the leader to his followers, of the teacher to his pupils, to set an example through his actions. And who but the *karma-yogi* is unceasingly devoted to his work, for in work only he sees joy. Thus false vanity loses ground in society. Though the *karma-yogi* is contented within himself, he cannot live at all without work. Tukaram says, " What if I have found God by singing his praises, by *bhajan* ? Should I therefore give up my *bhajan* ? After all, *bhajan* has now become my nature."

> " Having first kept good company,
> Tuka became Pandurang.
> Why break the thread of *bhajan* ?
> Why change one's very nature ? "

The *karma-yogi* has climbed up the steps of action and reached the top ; but he does not even then lift his foot off the step. He cannot shake off action. Work has become

second nature to his limbs. In this way he continues to show to society the great use and value of the steps,—of service through performing *svadharma*.

It is indeed a great thing to rid society of falsehood. Through hypocrisy and deceit, society decays. If the *jnani*, the man of wisdom, were to sit in silence, others too would follow his example and sit with folded hands. The *jnani*, with eternal contentment, loses himself in inner happiness, and remains quiet ; but the other, though inwardly weeping, becomes inactive. One is at rest because he is happy at heart ; the other too is at rest though his mind is shrunken ! This state is terrifying. It encourages vanity and hypocrisy. That is why all the saints, even after reaching the heights, have with good reason held on to the means, the apron-strings of action, have kept on performing their *karma* till death. The mother delights in her children's games with their dolls. Though she knows that it is only make-believe, she joins in and creates in the children interest in the game. If she takes no part, the children would find no fun in it. If the *karmayogi*, because he is contented, gives up action, others, even though they have the need for it, will also give up action and therefore remain with hungry, joyless hearts.

Therefore the *karmayogi*, like the ordinary man, goes on working. He does not think that he is in any way an exceptional person. He exerts himself infinitely more than other men. It is not necessary to put a stamp on any action and mark it as spiritual. There is no need to advertise one's action. If you are a perfect *brahmachari* (a seeker of the real), then let your actions show a hundred times more zest than other men's. Even though you get less food, do much more work ; let society get more and more out of you. Let your *brahmacharya* be seen in your conduct and dealings, as the fragrance of sandal spreads far and wide.

The essence of the matter is that the *karmayogi*, by surrendering the desire for fruit, receives an infinite reward. His life proceeds evenly. He is radiant in body and mind. The society in which he moves is happy. He attains inward purity and also *jnana*. And society being rid of hypocrisy and deceit, the ideal of a perfect life comes within our reach. This, experience proves, is the greatness of *karma-yoga*.

(13) Obstacles in the course of karma-yoga

The *karma-yogi* does his work much better than others, because work to him is prayer, worship, ritual; work itself is a mode of worship (*puja*). I performed *puja*. After the *puja* I received the food offered during the worship, as *prasada* (a token of grace). But is this the reward, the payment for my *puja* ? If a man performs *puja* for the sake of the food, he will of course get immediately this part of *prasada*. But through the act of *puja*, the *karma-yogi* seeks to get the reward of the vision of God. He does not estimate his action so cheap that it can merely fetch him a portion of the food offering. He is not prepared to mark such a low price on his action. He does not apply such gross measure to his actions. When a man's outlook is gross, the fruit he receives will also be gross. There is a proverb among farmers—" Sow deep, but sow moist." It is not enough to sow deep ; there must be moisture in the soil too. With both depth and moisture in the soil, the yield will be enormous. So, the action should be " deep," *i.e.*, well-cultivated. And, it should also be moist with the love of God, with a sense of dedication. The *karma-yogi's* actions are sown deep, and surrendered to God.

We have developed some absurd ideas about the spirit. People imagine that once a man has become spiritual, there is no more need for him to move hand or foot, or do any work. They say, " What sort of religious man is this, who ploughs the fields and weaves *khadi* ? " But nobody asks how a

spiritual man can eat food. The God of the *karma-yogi* brushes down horses. At the Pandavas' *Rajasuya* sacrifice He clears the leaf plates after the feast. He goes out into the forest to graze cows. If the Lord of Dvaraka went back to Gokul again, He would tend cows, playing on His flute. So the saints have pictured a *karma-yogi* God who rubs horses down, takes cows out to graze, drives a chariot, cleans dishes and mops up floors. And they themselves have done the work of a tailor, or a potter, or a weaver, or a gardener, or a trader, or a barber or a cobbler. Doing these things, they have found themselves and become free.

People slip from the religious observance of *karma-yoga* for two reasons. In this connection, we must remember the specific nature of our *indriyas*. Our senses are caught up in dualities, such as likes and dislikes. For the things we want we feel an attachment, or fondness, and an aversion for other things. Thus attachment and aversion, desire and anger, gnaw into a man and eat him up. How noble, how beautiful, how infinitely rewarding *karma-yoga* is! But desire and anger tie round our necks this perpetual rattle, "Take this, and leave that," and we trail this behind us day and night. That is why, at the end of this Chapter, the Lord rings the warning bell, so that we may shake off this encumbrance and save ourselves. The *karma-yogi* should become, like the *sthitaprajna*, an embodiment of self-control.

CHAPTER IV

VIKARMA—THE KEY TO KARMA-YOGA

(14) How Vikarma helps Karma

In the last Chapter we discussed the *yoga* of desireless action. If we give up our *svadharma* (one's own *dharma*) and take over another's *dharma*, it is quite impossible to attain the goal of desirelessness. It is the merchant's *svadharma* to sell wholesome and necessary goods. But when he gives up his *svadharma* and starts selling luxuries got from across the seven seas, the motive is mercenary. How then can that action be free from desire ? Cherishing one's *svadharma* is therefore indispensable, if one is to free one's action from desire. But even the pursuit of *svadharma* can be full of desire. Let us take even the matter of non-violence (*ahimsa*). To the devotee of non-violence, violence is of course unthinkable. But it is possible to be non-violent in externals, and yet in fact be filled with violence ; for violence is a quality of the mind. It is not as if by abstaining from violent action outwardly, the mind becomes full of non-violence. Drawing the sword proclaims the attitude of violence ; but it is not true that by dropping the sword a man becomes non-violent. The practice of *svadharma* is exactly like this. To be free of desire, it is essential to keep clear of others' *dharma*. But this is only the first step towards freedom from desire. With this alone, we have not reached the goal.

Desirelessness, too, is a quality of the mind. As a means of creating this, the pursuit of *svadharma* is not enough ; other aids are needed. To light a lamp, one needs not only the oil and the wick, but a flame. When the lamp is lit, the darkness disappears. How is this lamp to be lit ? For this, we need to purify the mind. By self-examination, we have to cleanse the mind of its dirt. At the end of the

Third Chapter, the Lord spoke of this important matter, and from it the Fourth Chapter takes its origin.

In the *Gita*, the word "*karma*" (action) is used in the sense of *svadharma*. Our eating, drinking, sleeping, are all actions, but it is not these actions that the *Gita* refers to when it talks of *karma*. *Karma* there means the practice of *svadharma*. But in order to achieve freedom from desire through the practice of *svadharma*, something more is necessary—victory over *kama* and *krodha*, craving and anger. As long as the mind is not as pure and peaceful as the waters of the Ganga, desirelessness will not come to us. These actions performed to purify the mind, the *Gita* calls "*vikarma.*" The three words, "*karma,*" "*vikarma*", and "*akarma,*" occurring in the Fourth Chapter, are of the utmost importance. *Karma* is the concrete, outward action performed as *svadharma*. The participation of the *chitta*, the mind and heart, in this external action is "*vikarma.*" We bow our heads to someone, but if, while we are doing this, the heart too does not bow, the external act is meaningless. The inner and the outer must become one. I worship the *Siva-linga*, perform *abhisheka*, by bathing it in a continuous stream of water. But if, as I do this, the stream of my meditation too is not unbroken, what is the value of this ritual ? Then the *Siva-linga* is a stone, and I am another. It only means that two stones confront each other. The *yoga* of desireless action is achieved only when the outward action is combined with the purity of the mind within.

When we say "desireless action," the word "desireless" is more significant than the word "action" ; just as in "non-violent non-cooperation," the adjective "non-violent" is more important than "non-cooperation." If we leave out the non-violence and hold on to the non-cooperation, it could become a terrible thing. In the same way, if the

vikarma of the mind does not enter into the performance of *svadharma*, it would be a mockery.

The people who do social service today are only performing their *svadharma*. To serve people who are poor or lame, or are unhappy and in difficulties, and to make them happy, is the *dharma* that falls to us in the ordinary course. But we should not therefore conclude that all social workers have become *karma-yogis*. If the attitude of mind (*bhavana*) in social service is not pure, it can become a terrifying thing. All the egotism, the hatred and envy, the self-seeking and other distortions that we develop in serving our own families, all this we develop too in social service. We see with our own eyes how this happens, in the conflicts of social service organisations today.

(15) Karma + Vikarma = Akarma

The mind must stand united with the action ; this application of the mind, the *Gita* calls " *vikarma*." There is the common action, which is outwardly one's *svadharma*, and there is the special inward action. This special action varies with the needs of each individual mind. Many kinds of *vikarma*, with typical examples, are given in the Fourth Chapter. These, the *Gita* develops from the Sixth Chapter onwards. Only when we perform this special *karma*, when we unite the mind with outward action, does the light of desirelessness shine in it. When *vikarma*, the action of the mind and heart, enters into *karma*, the outward action, desirelessness grows within us, little by little. As long as the body and the mind remain separate, each has its own distinct means of growth. When we bring them together, the goal is within our reach. Lest the body and the mind should go different ways, the great moralists have shown a two-fold path—in *bhakti-yoga* (the way of devotion) they mention penance (*tapas*) without and meditation (*japa*) within. When inwardly, the mind does not meditate,

outward forms of penance, like fasting, are entirely wasted. While doing penance, the inward flame, the *bhavana*, should constantly burn and shine. The very meaning of the word "*upa-vasa*" (fasting) is "to dwell close to God." It is in order that our minds and hearts may stay near God that we have to close the door against the pleasures of the senses. But if we give up the pleasures of the senses and do not think of God, of what value is the physical act of fasting ? If, instead of thinking of God, we think of things to eat and drink, the fast would be more fearful than a feast ! There is nothing as terrible as this mental feasting, as thinking about pleasures. *Tantra* must be accompanied by *mantra*, action by meditation. Action as such has no value, nor mere meditation without action. The hand and the heart must work together to render true service.

If the outward action is not moistened by the heart's affection, then the performance of *svadharma* would remain barren ; it would not bear the flower and the fruit of desirelessness. Suppose we are nursing a sick man. If in such service to the sick, there is no compassion, it would become dull and disgusting to us, and a burden instead of a relief to the patient. Moreover, where the heart is not engaged, egoism too would show its head. We would entertain expectations like this : "I served him today. He should serve me at my need ; he should admire and praise me." Or else, we get fed up and say, "I do so much for him, and yet he keeps complaining." Sick men are usually peevish —and those who nurse them without the true spirit of service will only be disgusted by this.

When the inner feeling goes with the action, the latter is transformed into something unique. When the flame is applied to the wick in the oil, light is born. When *vikarma* is applied to *karma*, desirelessness comes into being. When a spark touches the gunpowder, it explodes. A power is

released from the gunpowder. The mere act, the *karma*, is like powder, which has to be activated by the fire of feeling, *vikarma*. The power that *karma* develops at the touch of *vikarma* is indescribable. A pinch of lifeless powder in one's pocket blows up a whole body when a spark lights on it. In the same way, the infinite power of the practice of *svadharma* lies latent. Touch it with *vikarma*, and see what work it can do ! In the resulting explosion desire and anger are destroyed, and the way made clear for the attainment of supreme wisdom.

Action (*karma*) is thus the wick of the lamp of knowledge (*jnana*). There is a log of wood lying somewhere ; when you set fire to it, it becomes a mass of glowing embers. What a difference between that wood and this fire ! But it is the wood that has become this fire. When you apply *vikarma* to *karma*, the latter begins to acquire divine radiance. The mother strokes her child's back. A hand moves up and down a back, and no more. But who can describe the feelings arising in the hearts of the mother and the child from this commonplace action ? But if you frame an equation that if, on a back of such length and such breadth, a hand of such weight and such softness is moved, so much joy will result, it would be absurdly comic. The action of the moving hand is quite insignificant—but the mother has poured her heart into it, she has added *vikarma* to it. It is this that causes the thrill of joy. There is a situation in Tulasi's *Ramayana*. The monkeys were returning from a battle with the *rakshasas*, with their bodies wounded and bleeding. But when Rama's loving look rested on them for a moment, all their pain vanished. Now, if someone else had taken a photograph of Rama's eyes and look at that moment, and carefully opened out his own eyes in the same way, could this have the same power ? The very attempt would be ridiculous.

When *vikarma* is combined with *karma*, a power is released which results in *akarma* (inaction in action). The huge log of wood burns and becomes a handful of ashes, with which we can joyfully smear our bodies. In the same way, the fire of *vikarma* reduces *karma* to the ashes of *akarma*. What is the relation between the wood and the ash ? "*Kah kena sambandhah* ?" (What is the relation, and with what ?) They have no common properties, and yet there is no doubt that the ash came from the wood.

Now, what do we mean by saying that, by pouring *vikarma* into *karma*, it becomes *akarma* ? We mean that, while acting, we seem not to act, we do not feel the burden of action. Though we act, we are not the doer. The *Gita* says, that though you have slain, you are not the slayer. The mother beats her child ; if you try doing the same, the child will not stand it. But when the mother beats her child, he still goes back to her and hides his face in her lap—for there is *chitta-suddhi*, purity of heart, behind the mother's outwardly harsh action. Her punishment of the child was disinterested. It had no selfish motive. By *vikarma*, by inner purity, *karma* ceases to be *karma*. That look of Rama's, because of inward *vikarma*, had become a mighty ocean of the healing of love ; but the action cost Rama no effort. An action performed with pure heart does not attach itself to us. It leaves no residue of sin or merit, *punya* or *papa* ; else, what a heavy pressure of action would our hearts and minds have to bear ! If the news gets abroad at 2 o'clock today, that all political prisoners are to be released tomorrow, people gather together from all sides, and what confusion, what tumult ! The problem of morality, the goodness and badness of actions, distracts us. We feel that action crowds in on us from all sides, we feel that it has caught us by the throat. Just as the waves of the sea dash with force against the land and make channels into it, the complexity of action (*karma*)

enters the mind and agitates it. The quality of pleasure and pain, *sukha* and *duhkha*, develops ; all peace is lost. The action takes place, and is over, but its force remains behind. Action corrupts the mind, and destroys sleep.

But if, with *karma*, we combine *vikarma*, then, however much work you do, you will not feel its strain. The mind becomes still, steady and radiant, like the pole-star. When you put *vikarma* into *karma*, it becomes *akarma* ; it is as if you wrote *karma* on a slate, and then rubbed it out.

(16) The art of akarma—learn it from the saints.

How does *karma* become *akarma*—how does action become inactivity and inactivity become action ? From whom can we learn this art ? From the saints, of course. At the end of the Fourth Chapter, the Lord says, " Go to the saints and learn from them." In describing how *karma* becomes *akarma*, the powers of language are exhausted. To see it fully, we have to sit at the feet of the saints. The Lord is pictured as " *saantaakaaram bhujagasayanam* "—he is asleep and at rest on the coiled power of Sesha, the thousand-headed serpent. In the same way, the saints, though engaged in a thousand actions, do not allow a ripple to arise in the still waters of their mind. One can never understand this miracle until one goes to a saint and sees it.

Now-a-days books have become very cheap. For an anna or two, one can get books like the *Gita* and " *Manache Slok* " (a Marathi book by Samarth Ramdas). And of *gurus* there is no lack. Education too is widely spread and costs little. Universities seem to distribute knowledge in neat little packets. But no one seems to be satisfied with feeding on this nectar of knowledge. The more one looks at this mountain of books, the more one realises how necessary it is to serve the saints. It looks as though wisdom is held fast within the thick binding of these books, and cannot

come out. On such occasions I am reminded of a Marathi *abhang* :—

> In front of me stand the high mountains of craving and anger.
>
> Far, far beyond them is the Infinite.

Beyond the high mountains of craving and anger dwells the Lord Narayana. In the same way, behind these book-heaps, the King of Knowledge sits hidden. Though surrounded by libraries and reading rooms, man everywhere still remains a monkey without culture or knowledge. Once in a big library in Baroda, a gentleman was taking out a fat volume with pictures in it. He thought it was in English. I asked him what book it was, and he thrust it forward. I said, " But this is French," and he replied, " So it has turned out to be a French book, has it ? So you know French, do you ? " Clear Roman letters, fine pictures, and a beautiful binding—isn't this knowledge enough ?

In English alone, tens of thousands of books are published every year. You may take it that this is so in other languages too. Though knowledge spreads so rapidly, how does man's mind manage to remain still empty ? One man says that human memory is getting weaker ; another, that men are losing the power of concentration ; still another, that whatever he reads seems true to him, and he cannot discriminate ; yet another declares, " My dear Sir, I have no time to think." The Lord Krishna says, " Arjuna, you have been listening to far too many things, and your mind is dazed. Till it gets steady, you will not see the way clearly. Stop reading books and listening to people, and now take sanctuary with the saints. There you can read the book of life." There, as Sankaracharya says of the Lord Dakshinamurti, " The *guru's* speech is silence ; the disciples, freed from doubt." By going there you will understand how utterly serene the mind can be while performing continuous service ; you will understand how, though action rages without, the heart can be tuned to produce unbroken music.

CHAPTER V

THE TWO ASPECTS OF AKARMA—YOGA AND SANNYASA

(17) Outward action—a mirror of the mind

The world's ways are terrible. *Samsara*, life in the world, has been compared to an ocean. In the ocean, wherever you look, you see nothing but water ; *samsara*, too, is like that. It surrounds you on all sides. If one gives up hearth and home and takes up public service, there too he finds that the same *samsara* pitches its tent in his mind and occupies it. If one goes and sits in a cave, one's palm's-width loin-cloth is the warp and woof of *samsara*. The loin-cloth becomes for him the essence of all possessiveness. Just as a little currency-note holds a thousand rupees, the little piece of cloth holds boundless attachment. Because one renounces one's family, narrows one's circle, *samsara* has not therefore relaxed its hold on one ; by reducing one's possessions, one does not reduce one's possessiveness. Whether you say 10/25 or 2/5, it means the same. Whether at home or in the forest, attachment is ever with us. The pressure of *samsara* is no lighter. If two *yogis* went and dwelt in the caves of the Himalayas, even there, if one comes to hear of the other's fame, he burns with envy. Even in the field of public service, one sees the same thing.

The universe of *samsara* pursues us in such a way that, even when we live within the bounds of *svadharma*, it never lets us go. Though one has given up all distracting activities and complications, and has retained *samsara* only in name, one still remains filled with possessiveness, *mamatva*. *Samsara*, like any *rakshasa* (demon), can assume a larger or smaller form. Big or small, a *rakshasa* is a *rakshasa*. What is inescapable is the same wherever you are, in a palace or in a hut. Even if, with the hoops of *svadharma*, you bind

the bale of *samsara*, and keep it of uniform weight, then too all sorts of troubles arise, and you become disgusted. Even in your *svadharma* you will get entangled with persons and institutions, and will exclaim, " How did I get into this mess ? " But only then is your mind tested on the touchstone. Merely by making one's own the practice of *svadharma*, one does not become untouched by *samsara*. Reducing the area of one's activity is not the same as being unattached.

How then can we achieve detachment ? We should put into the effort the whole of our mind. Without the mind's help, nothing can succeed. We see how a boy whose parents have sent him to a school where he gets up early in the morning, drinks no tea and performs *suryanamaskar* (Sun-worship with its rhythmic exercises), goes back home and, in a few days, reverts to his old habits. A man is not a lump of clay. If we wish to give a certain shape to his mind, after all. the mind must receive it. If the mind does not accept it, then we have to admit that all this education from without is useless. So, in the process of growth, the co-operation of the mind is essential.

As a means of growth, external action, the performance of *svadharma*, and the inward attitude of the mind, *vikarma*, both are needed. The external action is of course necessary. If you do not act, you cannot test your mind. In the stillness of early morning, our minds seem perfectly calm—but the moment a child cries, we see what our peace of mind is really worth. So we achieve little by rejecting action. External actions reveal the real quality of our minds. The surface of the water is clear ; but throw a stone into it, and at once the mud rises up. Our minds are just like that. At the bottom of the still lake, there is knee-deep mud. It is only when an object from without touches it that one can see it. We say in our languages, " Anger has come to a

man." *Did that anger come from without ? No, it was within—else it could never have shown itself.*

People say that they prefer coloured khadi to white, because "coloured khadi doesn't get dirty." But that too gets dirty ; only, dirt does not show on coloured khadi, while it shows up on white. It cries out, "I am dirty ; wash me, please." People do not like khadi that tells tales. Our *karma* (action), too, talks. It proclaims that we are given to anger, or selfishness, or something else. *Karma* is the mirror which shows us our true form. We should, therefore, be grateful to *karma*. Would we smash a mirror because it shows us a dirty, ugly face ? On the contrary, we should thank it and go and wash our face, and come back and look at ourselves in the mirror. Similarly, if through *karma* the defects and weaknesses of our mind come out, should we then wish to avoid *karma* ? Will our minds become pure by our turning away from *karma* ? So let us continue to act, and make progressive efforts to make the mind pure.

A man goes and sits in a cave, cut off from all human contact. He imagines that he has attained perfect calm of mind. But let him leave the cave and go out to beg for his food. A mischievous little boy rattles the bolt of a door, and is absorbed in contemplating the noise it makes, but the *yogi* cannot bear the music that the innocent child makes and enjoys. By living in a cave, he has made his mind so weak that he cannot stand the slightest jolt. A little rattling noise shatters his peace of mind. It is not good that one's mind should be in such a weak state.

Which means *karma* is a very useful thing to enable us to understand what our minds are like. When defects come to light, we can get rid of them. If they are hidden from sight, progress is obstructed and growth comes to an end. When we act and discover our own defects, we are impelled to employ *vikarma* to remove them. When this effort of *vikarma*

goes on day and night within, then we shall learn in due time how, while performing *svadharma*, one can remain unattached, and get beyond *kama* and *krodha* (craving and anger), *lobha* and *moha* (greed and delusion). If we endeavour constantly to keep action free of impurity, then, later, pure *karma* will go on of itself. When once actions do not distort the mind, but take place naturally, one after the other, we do not notice that they have taken place at all. When *karma* becomes natural and normal (*sahaja*), it becomes *akarma*. As we have seen in the Fourth Chapter, it is this *sahaja karma* that we call *akarma*. How *karma* is transformed into *akarma*, and how we can learn this art at the feet of the saints, this too the Lord has taught at the end of the Fourth Chapter. Words cannot describe this state of *akarma*.

(18) The state of akarma

To understand the naturalness of action, let us take a familiar example. When a child first learns to walk, how much effort he has to put into it ! But to us it is a delight to watch this game. We say, " Look, baby is beginning to walk ! " But later, walking becomes natural. He walks and he talks. He does not think about it. It is the same with eating. We celebrate " *annaprasan* " (a ceremony performed when the child is first given solid food), as if eating is a great accomplishment. But, in course of time, eating becomes quite natural. How hard it is to learn to swim ! At first, we struggle for breath, but a time comes when we go for a swim to shake off fatigue. Now, swimming is no effort ; swimming has become second nature to the body. Fatigue is a state of mind. When the mind is consciously engaged in the action it feels tired ; but when action becomes natural, it ceases to weigh on us. *Karma* has become *akarma*. It is full of joy.

Our ideal is to make *karma* turn into *akarma*—to this end, we should perform the *karma* which is our *svadharma*.

In doing so, our failings come to light, and to remove these, we should hold on to *vikarma*. Through such continuous practice, the mind will reach a stage where it will not feel the slightest effort or disgust in action. Though thousands of actions are done by our hands, the mind remains clear and calm. If you look up and question the sky, " Brother sky, do you not get scorched by the sun, and wet with the rain ? Don't you shiver with the cold ?" what answer do you expect ? Will it not say, " You can settle what happens to me ; I know nothing."

" Whether the man who is mad
Is naked or clad,
Is a matter which bothers
Only the others."

This means that when we go on performing actions which are our *svadharma*, in order to purify the mind with the help of *vikarma*, these actions become natural to us. Even the most trying situations do not seem difficult. This is the key to *karma-yoga*. If you try to force open a lock without a key, you will only bruise your hands ; with the key, you can open it in no time. This master-key, which eliminates all strain and trouble, one gets by conquering the mind. So one must strive incessantly to achieve control over the mind. In other words, one should wash off the dirt that appears in the mind in the course of action. Then outward action will cease to cause trouble ; even the feeling that " I am the doer " will vanish ; *kama* and *krodha*, craving and anger, will lose their power ; there will be no trace of effort. Even the awareness of action will not remain.

Once a good man wrote to me, " We have to do *japa* (recitation) of *Ramanama* a certain number of times. Please do join us in this, and let me know how many you can do in a day." The poor man was acting to the best of his knowledge. I am not saying this with the idea of criticising him.

But *Ramanama* is not the sort of thing to be measured or counted. The mother tends the child. Does she ever want to publish reports on it ? If she cared for publicity, we could say, " Thank you," and discharge our debt to her. But she protests, " What have I done ? I've done nothing. Is this a burden to me ? " When, with the help of *vikarma*, a man applies his mind, and acts with full heart, it ceases to be *karma* and becomes *akarma*. In such action, there is no question of strain, confusion or fatigue.

It is impossible to describe this state. We can only form a hazy picture of it in our minds. When the sun rises, does the idea enter its mind to say, " I shall banish the darkness, I shall urge the birds to fly, and set men working " ? The sun just stands still, where it rises. But the very fact of its being makes all the world go round. But the sun is not aware of this. If you said to the sun, " O Sun-God, the help you give is infinite, how much darkness you have dispelled ! " it would make no sense to him. He would say, " Bring a little darkness and show it to me. If I can dispel it, I shall accept that I am the doer and do all this." How can one carry darkness to the sun ? Because the sun exists, darkness keeps off. In the light of the sun, one man may read a good book ; and another, an obscene one ; one may set fire to his neighbour's house, another help a neighbour. But the sun is not responsible for the good or the evil of these acts. The sun says, " Light is my nature. What else but light could there be in me ? I am not aware that I am shedding light. For me, to be is to shine. I am not aware of the strain of giving light. I do not feel that I am doing anything."

The giving of light (*prakash-dan*) is natural to the sun. The saints too are like that. Their very life is a gift of light. If you tell a *jnani*, " Sir, you are a great man, you speak the truth," he would answer, " If I do not follow truth, what else

could I do ? I am doing nothing special." There is no room for untruth near the *jnani*.

Being thus is the basis of *akarma*. The actions become so much a part of one's being and nature, that one is not conscious of their happening. The senses get used to them. Actions become worship, and speech moves to virtue, for *karma* has become *akarma*. The *jnani* performs good actions as naturally as the birds sing. As the child thinks of its mother, so, inevitably, the saint thinks of God. Every morning, the cock crows ; this is its natural function. Panini, the grammarian, chose this as an example, when he was teaching *svaras* to his pupils. From the days of Panini, right up till now, the cock crows every morning. But no one ever thought of giving to the cock an address of thanks and appreciation. One expects no recognition for acting according to one's nature. It is only natural for good men to do good things like telling the truth, loving all creatures, finding no fault in others, and being of service to everyone. They cannot live otherwise. Do we specially honour a man for eating ? Service to others comes naturally to a *jnani*, just as eating, drinking and sleeping do to ordinary people. It is impossible for him to say, " I shall not help." We should take it that the *karma* of such a *jnani* has become *akarma*. This condition has been given the holy status of *akarma* which is *sannyasa*. The same state should also be called " *karma-yoga*." Since the *jnani* goes on acting, it is " *yoga* " ; but since, even while acting, he doesn't think of it, it is " *sannyasa* ". Since, in action he uses a technique (*yukti*) which keeps him from being touched by it, it is *yoga* ; and since, even though acting, he does not act, it is " *sannyasa* " (being given over to the eternal goodness.)

(19) One aspect of akarma : Yoga

What does *sannyasa* mean, ultimately ? Is it giving up some actions, and doing others? No, the meaning of *san-*

nyasa is " giving up all action." To be free from all action, not to act at all, that is *sannyasa.* But what does " not acting " mean ? Action is a curious thing. How can we give up all action ? Action is in front of us and behind us, to right and left of us ; it spreads all round us in every direction. Why, if we sit down, that too is action. Not only is " to sit " a verb in grammar, but sitting is a physical action. And if we sit still for some time, the legs begin to ache ; even sitting still is a strain. When doing nothing itself turns out to be an action, how is it possible to give up action ? The Lord revealed to Arjuna his Universal Form. Seeing its vastness, Arjuna became afraid and shut his eyes ; even then, the same form appeared within. If we see a thing even when we shut our eyes, how can we escape from it ? And how are we to avoid action which goes on even when we are doing nothing ?

A certain man had large quantities of valuable gold jewels. He wished to keep them safely locked up in a big box. His servant got a big strong steel box made for him. He looked at it and said, " You idiot ! Have you no sense of beauty or fitness ? Would anyone keep these priceless jewels in this ugly iron box ? Go and get me a good gold box." The servant did as he was told. " A gold box needs a gold lock," said the master. Starting out to hide the gold from others' eyes, he finally succeeded in advertising it. There was no need for the thief to search for the gold. He had only to carry away the box. Thus, not acting becomes a kind of action. How can one give up action which is so all-pervasive ?

But there is a way of renouncing action, and that is to devise a method by which, though we do all the actions in the world, they melt and flow away from us. It is only when this becomes possible that we can say that *sannyasa* has been reached. How to perform *karma* and yet make it melt and flow away ? Look at the sun. It acts night and day. Even

at night it acts and lights up the other side of the earth. Although it works all the time, no one ever talks of the sun working. That is why, in the Fourth Chapter, the Lord says, " I taught this *yoga* first to Surya (the Sun-God). From him, Manu, the seeker and thinker, learnt it." Though working all the twenty-four hours of the day, the sun does not act. There is no doubt that this condition is truly wonderful.

(20) The other aspect of akarma : Sannyasa

But this is only one form of *sannyasa.* One aspect of this state of *akarma* is that, though the man acts, he does not act. The other aspect is that, though he does not act at all, he moves the whole world to action. There is in him an immeasurable power to impel to action. This is the paradox of *akarma* : it is filled with a power that is capable of infinite action. It is like steam which, when compressed, does enormous work. Steam that is enclosed gains tremendous power, and moves huge ships and long trains. It is the same with the sun which does nothing at all, but works all the twenty-four hours in the day. If asked, the sun would say, " I do nothing at all." One aspect of the sun is that it works day and night and yet does nothing ; the other, that while it does nothing, it performs infinite action day and night. These are the two splendid sides of *sannyasa.*

And both are rare. In one aspect, the action is explicit, and the state of *akarma* implicit. In the other, though the state of *akarma* is clearly manifest, yet, because of it, endless activity is continuously going on. In this state, *akarma* is filled to overflowing with action, and thus mighty actions are achieved. There is a world of difference between the man in this state and the idler. The lazy man gets easily tired and depressed. But the *sannyasi,* who does no work, conserves his power. He does not work at all. That is, he does not work with his limbs, or with his mind. But even while he does nothing, he does infinite work.

Supposing someone we have offended is just silent, and does not speak when we go to him. How great is the effect of his silence, his "renunciation of speech"! Another man in the same situation splutters out his indignation. Both are angry, but while one does not open his mouth, the other bursts out. Both are examples of anger. Being silent too is only a manifestation of anger. And it serves the purpose. How terrible it is for a child when its father or mother stops speaking to it ! Not speaking, giving up action, is far more effective than any kind of positive action. Silence can achieve what speaking cannot. Such is the state of the *jnani.* His non-action, his silence, his sitting still, accomplishes much, releases great power for action. What action cannot achieve, these men, remaining inactive, accomplish. This is the other side of *sannyasa.*

In such *sannyasa*, all initiative and all effort come together and rest in one place.

> The movement of action has stopped
> And sunk like a sack on the Lord's wings.
> All care is over, and faith has come ;
> I dwell no more in the womb.
> Not in my own being do I live ;
> The Lord has robbed me of my pride.
> Tuka says, " I live in the being of the One.
> I am empty and hollow."

Tukaram says, " I am now empty, like a sack. All activity is at an end." But in that empty sack there is hidden a mighty energy. The sun calls aloud to no one ; yet, at his sight, birds fly, lambs frolic, the cows go out to graze in the forest, merchants open their shops, the farmer goes to the field, all the world gets busy. It is enough that the sun exists. From it, endless actions take their rise. The state of *akarma* is filled with the strength to move to infinite action, it is filled

to the brim with infinite power. Such is the other wonderful aspect of *sannyasa.*

(21) Who can compare the two ?

In the Fifth Chapter, the two ways of *sannyasa* are compared. One is doing nothing while working twenty-four hours in the day, the other is doing everything while not working even for a moment. The one is silence in speech, the other is speech through silence. Let us consider these two divine states, and inquire about them, and meditate upon them—there is a rare joy in it.

In fact, this whole matter is both rare and exalted. Truly, this idea of *sannyasa* is most holy, most beautiful. We can never thank enough whoever it was that first sought and discovered an idea of such shining splendour. This idea of *sannyasa,* one may say, is the highest point reached by man's intellect, his power of thought. Beyond this, no man's thought has stretched, to this day. Attempts at higher flights are still going on, but neither in concept nor in experience has anyone surpassed this. There is a rare joy in the very contemplation of this *sannyasa* with its two aspects. But when we come to the world of speech and action, the joy fails ; we feel that we are falling. On this matter, I have thought and talked with my friends for many years, and I have discovered the inadequacy of language to deal with it.

It is a noble, delightful, poetical concept this, of doing everything by doing nothing, and doing nothing in doing everything. Where else but here could we find poetry ? The famous masterpieces of poetry are insipid beside this. No poem can compare with this idea in producing sheer joy, enthusiasm, energy and a sense of the divine. Therefore, the Fifth Chapter has been established at a very high level. Till the Fourth Chapter, *karma* and *vikarma* were described ; now we are taken on a higher flight. Here the two aspects of the state of *akarma* are compared before our eyes. Here

words stumble. Is the *karma-yogi* better, or the *karma-sannyasi* ? Who really does more work ? It is impossible to answer these questions. Doing nothing though doing all things, to do all things by doing nothing—both alike are *yoga* ; but for the sake of comparison, one is called *yoga*, the other *sannyasa*.

(22) Examples from Geometry and Mimamsa

It is so difficult to compare them ; how then are we to set about it ? Only through illustrations. But when we begin to illustrate, we have the feeling of falling from a height. But we have to come down. In truth, the idea of absolute *karma-sannyasa* or *karma-yoga* cannot be completely expressed in a living person ; they would shatter the human body. We can only use as examples the saints who have approached the ideal. Examples are never perfect, but for the time being, one has to assume that they are.

We say in Geometry, " Let ABC be a triangle." But why " postulate " this ? Because the lines of the triangle are not real. A line, by definition, has length, but no width. But how to show on the blackboard this length without width ? Every line we draw to indicate length possesses some width. Therefore, in Geometry, we cannot proceed without " postulates." It is the same in *bhakti-sastra*. There too the devotee says, " Let the Lord of the Universe be in this small round stone called *salagram*." If anyone exclaims, " What madness is this ?" you could ask him, " Is not your Geometry equally mad ? When I see clearly a thick fat line, you ask me to suppose that it has no width. Isn't that madness ? If you look at it through a microscope, it is half an inch thick. Just as Geometry wants us to postulate some things, *bhakti* wants us to postulate the presence of God in the *salagram*." If he says, " God won't crack, but your *salagram* will ; I shall give it a blow," he is not being clever. If you can " postulate " in Geometry, why not in *bhakti*? Imagine a point, we say,

and draw on the board a whole circle. But if you start defining a point, it might turn out to be something like defining *brahman*. A point has no length, no width, no thickness—nothing, in fact. Though we define it thus, we represent it clearly on the blackboard. Though it exists, it has no dimensions. The fact is that the true triangle, or the true point, exists only in definition, but we have to proceed on the assumption that they actually exist. In *bhakti* too, we have to postulate the existence of the indestructible all-pervading God within the *salagram*. We shall now make the comparison with the help of examples which we shall take to be perfect.

The *mimamsakas*, the interpreters of the Vedas, have done something delightful. In enquiring where God is, they have given a very beautiful explanation. Regarding the gods who appear in the Vedas—Indra, Agni and Varuna—these questions arise : " What sort of person is this Indra ? What is his form like ? Where does he dwell ?" And the *mimamsaka* answers, " The word ' Indra ' is the form of Indra. He lives in the word ' Indra.' The sounds ' *In-dra* ' constitute his being. This is his figure ; this is his measure." And what about Varuna ? He too is " *Va-ru-na*,"—that is his form. We may extend this to Agni and the other gods. All the gods are formed out of syllables—this image, this conception, is delightful. Our image of a god, the reality called a god, cannot be contained in any form. To reveal the mental image, the syllables that make up his name are good enough symbols. If asked, "What is God like ?", we answer " *G-O-D* ". In the end, " *Om* " has worked wonders. It has itself become God. It has become a symbol of God. It is necessary to invent such symbols, for these vast concepts cannot be enclosed in any image or form; but man's desire is compulsive. He persists in attempting to give body to such ideas.

(23) The sannyasi and the yogi are one—Witness: Suka and Janaka

Sannyasa and *yoga* are both such high concepts that in their absolute form they cannot be embodied in any human being. But though they cannot be contained by the body, they can be comprehended by the mind. We have to stop with describing in words what the perfect *yogi* and the perfect *sannyasi* are like. They will always remain ideal and inaccessible, but as examples we should take those who have approached the ideal. Then, as in Geometry, we should take it that these are perfect *yogis* and perfect *sannyasis*. We illustrate *sannyasa* by Suka and Yajnavalkya. As *karma-yogis*, the Gita itself mentions Janaka and Sri Krishna. Lokamanya Tilak, in *Gita-Rahasya*, gives a long list, " Janaka, Sri Krishna and others followed this path ; Suka, Yajnavalkya and others followed that path." But thinking a little, one sees that the distinction evaporates as if written with water. Yajnavalkya was a *sannyasi*, Janaka was a *karma-yogi*. That is, Janaka, the *karma-yogi* was a disciple of Yajnavalkya the *sannyasi* ; but Sukadeva the *sannyasi* was the disciple of this same Janaka. Suka was the disciple of Janaka, who was the disciple of Yajnavalkya. First the *sannyasi*, then the *karma-yogi*, and then again the *sannyasi*, so the garland is strung. Thus *yoga* and *sannyasa* succeed each other in the same line.

Vyasa said to Suka, " Suka, my son, you have no doubt attained wisdom, but no *guru* has yet set his seal on you. Go therefore to Janaka." Sukadeva went. Janaka was sitting on the third floor of his great palace. Suka was a forest-dweller. His eyes drank in the sights of the city as he went along.

Janaka asked him, " Why have you come here ?"

Suka answered, " To get knowledge."

" Who sent you ?"

" Vyasadeva."

"Where do you come from ?"

"From the ashram."

"What did you see in the market on the way ?"

"I saw rows upon rows of sweets piled up on all sides."

"And what else did you see ?"

"I saw sugar dolls walking and talking."

"And what else ?"

"For my coming up here, there were solid sugar steps."

"What else did you find ?"

"Here too, I see sugar pictures everywhere."

"What do you see now ?"

"One sugar doll talking to another."

Then Janaka said, "Now you may go. You have attained all wisdom."

Suka had secured what he wanted, a signed certificate from Janaka. The point is that the *karma-yogi* had accepted as disciple the *sannyasi* Suka. Suka no doubt remained a *sannyasi*, but how delightful the situation is !

Parikshit was under a curse—he was to die in seven days. He had to get ready for his death. He needed a *guru* who could teach him how to die. He sent for Sukacharya, who came and sat cross-legged for 24 × 7 = 168 hours, narrating the *Bhagavata.* He did not once change his position, and went on with his story without a break. What is wonderful about this is that, though he had to work intensely for seven whole days, he felt no strain. Though he was constantly working, it was as if he did no work at all. He had not even a feeling of effort. The truth is that *sannyasa* and *karma-yoga* are not two different things.

Hence the Lord says,

"*ekam saankhyam cha yogam cha yah pasyati sa pasyati.*"

"He truly sees, who sees *sankhya* and *yoga* as one."

He who realises that *sankhya* and *yoga* are one, can be said to have understood the real secret. The one acts while being

inactive, and the other, though he acts, does not feel the effort. A real *sannyasi*, one who is in constant *samadhi*, and free from all distorting passion—if we keep one such with us for ten days, what light, what energy, he radiates ! What could not be achieved by repeated efforts through the years, comes easy because we look at him, because he is with us. When the mind is purified by a look at a photograph, when the heart is filled with devotion, love and holiness by looking at the picture of a dead person, what inspiration can we not derive from seeing a live *sannyasi* ? The *sannyasi* and the *yogi* alike bring good to the world. In the one case, though it seems as though action has been renounced, this state of renunciation is filled to the brim with action. It holds boundless creative power and illumination. Both the *sannyasi* and the *karma-yogi* are *jnanis*, seers, and are entitled to the same high throne. Though the names are different, the substance is the same. They are two modes of the same reality. A wheel in rapid motion seems at rest. The state of the *sannyasi* is similar. From his *santi*, his peace and steadiness, flows infinite power, endless movement. Mahavira, Buddha, and Nivrttinatha were such realised souls. Though all the endeavours of the *sannyasi* have ceased, and come to a rest, he does mighty deeds. As stone means *pashana* and *pashana* means stone, "*sannyasa*" means "*karma-yoga*" and "*karma-yoga*" means "*sannyasa.*"

(24) And yet yoga is to be preferred to sannyasa

Though all this is true, yet the Lord adds a qualification. He says that *karma-yoga* is better than *sannyasa*. When the two are identical, why should the Lord prefer one ? Is this a joke ? When the Lord says that *karma-yoga* is better, he speaks from the standpoint of the *sadhaka*, the seeker after perfection. To do nothing, and yet to do all things, is possible for the *siddha*, the perfected one, not for the *sadhaka*, the seeker. But even he can practise in some measure the

method of doing all things and yet doing nothing. The one rule is impossible for the seeker, it is appropriate only to the *siddha* ; but the other is practicable to a certain extent, even for the seeker. Action through inaction is a riddle beyond the understanding of the *sadhaka*. *Karma-yoga* is both the way and the goal, but *sannyasa* is only the goal. From the point of view of the *sadhaka*, *karma-yoga* is preferable to *sannyasa*.

On the same principle, the Lord, in the Twelfth Chapter, stresses the *saguna* (God with form) rather than the *nirguna* (God without form). The *saguna* engages the mind and the senses, while the *nirguna* does not. The *nirguna* has no use for the devotee's hands, feet or eyes—all his senses remain inactive. The *sadhaka* is not able to use them aright for their own fulfilment. But in *saguna*, the eyes can see the Lord's form, the ears can hear His praises, the hands can offer worship to Him and serve human beings, the feet can take him on pilgrimage—thus all the organs are assigned appropriate work, and gradually given over to Hari, the Lord. But in *nirguna*, there is a ban on all this—the mouth is shut, the ears are closed, the hands and feet bound. The poor *sadhaka* looks at this state of being bound in and shut up, and is frightened. How could *nirguna* find a place in his heart ? If he sat in silence, his mind will soon be filled with a succession of unrelated thoughts. And the nature of the senses is such that they invariably do what they are told not to do. Isn't that so in advertisements ? They write, " Don't read this," on top of something and everybody reads it first. You say, " Don't read this," to see that everybody reads it and reads it attentively. In *nirguna* the mind wanders. Not so in *saguna-bhakti*. Here there is *arati* and *puja* (ritual worship), and compassion and service to living beings ; here there is work for the senses. Once you have engaged the senses in work, you can say to your mind, " Now you can go where you like."

But then the mind wants to go nowhere, it is delighted to stay; without knowing it, it is one-pointed. But if you try consciously to concentrate it on something, it will run away and escape you. If you engage the various senses in noble and beautiful tasks, and then give the mind freedom to wander, it would prefer to stay. It will say, " I shall stay where I am." But if you order it to sit quiet, it will say, " I'm off."

Because man has a body, *saguna* is easier and therefore better. The art of acting and yet not clinging to it is preferable to action through inaction, because it is easier. There is room in *karma-yoga* for effort and practice. Through *karma-yoga* one can learn to control the senses and, little by little, detach the mind from all activity. And if the method does not succeed today, it is bound to succeed some day. Ease in practice distinguishes *karma-yoga* from *sannyasa*, but in the state of perfection, they are the same. Though their names are different, and they appear to be two, they are in reality one. In one, the demon of *karma* is dancing without, but peace reigns within. In the other, though nothing is done, there is a power to shake the three worlds. In both cases, the reality is different from the appearance. If perfect *karma-yoga* is *sannyasa*, perfect *sannyasa* is *karma-yoga*. There is no difference; but for the seeker, *karma-yoga* is easy. In the perfect state, both are one.

Changadev sent a letter to Jnanadev. It was just a piece of blank paper. Jnanadev was younger in years, so he could not begin respectfully with "*pujya*.........". He could not begin with the blessing, " *chiranjivi*......", because Jnanadev was superior in wisdom. He could not decide how to begin the letter. So Changadev sent off the blank (*kora*) paper. It first reached the hands of Nivrttinath. He read it and gave it to Jnanadev. Jnanadev too read it and gave it to Muktabai. Muktabai read it and said, " Changadev has become so big, but he is still *kora*, hollow." Nivrttinath read another

meaning in it. He said, "Changadev is *kora*, innocent; he is pure and taintless and deserves to be taught." And he asked Jnanadev to answer this letter. Jnanadev wrote a letter of sixty-five *ovis* (Marathi stanzas). It is still known as "Changadev's Sixty-five." Such is the delightful story of this letter. It is easy to read what is written, but very difficult to read what is not written. You never come to the end of it. In the same way, though the *sannyasi* seems a hollow reed (*kora*), a blank piece of paper, he is full of illimitable action.

In the perfect state, *sannyasa* and *karma-yoga* are of equal worth, but the practical value of *karma-yoga* is higher. A currency note for fifty rupees, and a gold coin of the same value, so long as the government is stable, are of equal worth. But if there is a Revolution, the note is worth nothing. You can always get something in exchange for the gold coin, for it is, after all, gold. In the ultimate state, renunciation of *karma* and *karma-yoga* are of equal value, because, in both, there is equal *jnana* (knowledge) and its value is *ananta*, infinite. No matter what you add to infinity, the value remains infinite. When *karma-tyaga* and *karma-yoga* are added to perfect *jnana* which is infinity, they become equivalent. But once you remove *jnana* from both sides of the equation, *karma-yoga* is more valuable than *karma-tyaga* to the *sadhaka*, the seeker. It is only when we add firm, pure *jnana* to both, that they become equal. When the goal has been reached, *jnana* + *karma* = *jnana* + *akarma*. For the *sadhaka* it is difficult even to understand action through inaction. He can understand inaction through action. *Karma-yoga* is found both in the path and in the goal, but *sannyasa* only in the goal, and not in the path. In the terminology of the *sastras*, *karma-yoga* is both the way and the goal, the *sadhan* and the *nishtha*, but *sannyasa* is only *nishtha*. And "*nishtha*" means the ultimate state.

CHAPTER VI

CONTROLLING THE MIND

(25) Keenness for self-development

In the Fifth Chapter, we were able to see, through imagination and enquiry, how high a man can soar. *Karma*, *vikarma* and *akarma* together complete *sadhana*, the path. *Karma* is gross. In all our actions performed as *svadharma*, there should be the accompanying action of the mind. The action performed for educating the mind is *vikarma*, which is special *karma*, or subtle *karma*. *Karma* and *vikarma* are both necessary, and as we go on practising both, we lay the foundation of *akarma*. In the last Chapter we saw how, here, *karma* and *sannyasa* become one. In the beginning of the Sixth Chapter, the Lord says again that though the stand of the *karma-yogi* seems different from that of the *sannyasi*, they are quite the same. The difference is only in the way of looking at things. The aim of the later chapters is to discover the path to reach the state described in Chapter Five.

Many people mistakenly imagine that the spiritual life, and books like the *Gita*, are intended only for ascetics. When a man says, " I am not an ascetic," he seems to imply that ascetics form a species, like horses, lions, bears and cows ; and it is further implied that the spiritual life is only intended for that species. It is as if all other creatures in the work-a-day world belong to some different species, with thoughts and ways of its own. Such thinking has divided humanity into two kinds of beings, ascetics and worldly men. Lokamanya Tilak has drawn our attention to this in his *Gita Rahasya*. I wholeheartedly endorse his view that the *Gita* is a scripture intended for ordinary men, living their daily lives in the world. The *Bhagavad Gita* is for the whole world. All the spiritual practices are for every man in the world. *Paramartha*, the higher knowledge, teaches us how, by keeping our lives pure,

we can attain equilibrium and peace of mind. The *Gita* exists to tell us how our lives can be kept pure. And so the *Gita* comes to your help wherever you are doing something. But it is not content with leaving you just there ; it takes you by the hand and leads you right to the goal. Don't we know the famous saying, " If the mountain will not come to Muhammad, Muhammad will go to the mountain "? Muhammad wishes that his message should reach even the lifeless mountain. Indeed, because the mountain is lifeless, Muhammad would not expect the mountain to walk up to him. The same is true with the *Gita.* It is prepared to go to the lowest, the weakest, the least cultured of men. And it goes to him not to keep him where he is, but to grasp him by the hand and lift him up. The *Gita* wishes that man should make his actions pure, and attain the highest state. That is why the *Gita* was born.

Therefore, don't raise a fence round yourself, saying, " I am stupid, I am an ordinary fellow, wallowing in worldliness." Don't say, " What can I do ? My whole being is contained in this six-foot body." And don't raise such boundary walls around yourself and behave like an animal. . Be bold enough to move forward and climb upward.

> " *Uddharet atmanaatmaanam naatmaanamavasaadayet* "
> " Let a man raise the self by the Self ; let him not debase himself."

Have the courage to say, " I shall surely lift myself up." Do not kill the power of your mind, thinking, " I am a worthless worldly creature." Do not clip the wings of imagination ; spread them out. Take the *chandul* as your model. When it sees the rising sun, it thinks it can reach the sun, and flies towards it. We too should be like that. However high the poor *chandul* flies, can it ever reach the sun ? But through the imagination, it can certainly attain the sun. But our behaviour is just the opposite. We do not rise even as high

as we can, but instead, we cramp our imagination, weaken our power of growth, and so flutter down to earth. Even the power that is ours, we lose by undervaluing it. When imagination is crippled, one cannot but fall down. Let the imagination, therefore, be upward-looking. Since man progresses with the help of the imagination, do not throttle it. Don't whine—

> " Brother, do not leave the beaten track ;
> Stay where you are in the world, don't wander here and there in vain."

Don't dishonour your soul. The seeker can be steady only when he has wide imagination and self-confidence. Only by these can he sustain himself and grow. But give up the feeling that *dharma* is intended only for *sadhus* and *sannyasis*, that when you go to *sadhus* and *sannyasis* it is only to get a certificate from them that, situated as you are, you are doing the best you can. Do not bind yourself by thinking such self-stultifying thoughts. Without noble thoughts and aspiration you cannot advance one step.

If you have this vision, this aspiration, this noble confidence, then it is necessary to alter and adjust the means ; else, the whole thing comes to an end. To help outward action, the mental process, called *vikarma*, was prescribed. To complete *karma*, *vikarma* is constantly necessary. We saw, in the Fifth Chapter, the divine state of *akarma* reached with the help of these two, and its varieties. From this Sixth Chapter onwards are described the varieties of *vikarma*. The means of inward growth (*sadhana*) is described. But before explaining the *sadhana*, the *Gita* says, " Brother Soul, you can become a god. Hold on to this divine aspiration. Set free the mind, and strengthen its wings." Of this *sadhana* or *vikarma*, there are many kinds, like *bhakti-yoga* (devotion), *dhyana* (meditation), *jnana-vijnana* (enquiry and analysis),

guna-vikasa (the development of the personality), and *atma-anatma-viveka* (discrimination between the Self and non-Self).

In the Sixth Chapter is described the kind of *sadhana* called *dhyana-yoga* (the way of meditation).

(26) One-pointedness of mind

There are three important things in *dhyana-yoga* (the way of meditation), namely (1) one-pointedness of mind, (2) setting bounds to one's life, to help achieve this, and (3) a state of equanimity or evenness of vision. Without these, no true progress is possible. One-pointedness of mind means controlling its movements. Setting bounds to one's life means doing actions after weighing and measuring them. Evenness of vision means having the nobility to think in terms of the whole world. These three together make up *dhyana-yoga*. To achieve these three, one needs the help of *abhyasa* (practice) and *vairagya* (detachment). Let us now consider these five.

First, one-pointedness of mind. Whatever one may be doing, the mind should concentrate on it. Even in worldly affairs, such concentration is essential. It is not as if the qualities needed for worldly success are different from those needed for spiritual progress. The attempt to purify one's daily activities is spiritual life. Whatever one does, trade or research or politics, its success or failure depends on one's concentration on it. It is said of Napoleon that, after completing his arrangements for battle, he would lose himself in mathematical theories right on the field. Amidst showers of bullets, and dying soldiers, Napoleon's mind was absorbed in mathematics. Not that I say that Napoleon's concentration was of the highest. We know examples of higher kinds of concentration, but I wanted you to see how great his concentration was. Of Caliph Omar too it is said that in the midst of a battle, when it was time for *namaz*, he would draw in his thoughts and, kneeling in the battle-field, would begin to pray ; his concentration was such that he did not

even know whose men were mowed down. If Islam spread far and wide, it was because of the devotion to God and one-pointedness of the early Mussalmans.

The other day I heard a story. There was a fakir. An arrow had entered his body. The pain was unbearable. But any attempt to pull the arrow out would make it worse. They didn't know of chloroform or other anaesthetics in those days. It was a difficult situation. Some people who knew him came forward and said, " Don't try to pull out the arrow now. It will be easy to do so when he is at prayer." The time came for *namaz.* The fakir settled down to pray. In a moment his mind became one-pointed, and he did not know that the arrow was pulled out.

Look at the power of concentration !

The idea is that, whether in worldly or in spiritual matters, success is hard to come by without one-pointedness of mind. If the mind is concentrated, one will never lack ability. Even if you are an old man of sixty, you will have the enthusiasm and energy of a youth. As one grows older, one's mind should get stronger. Look at a fruit. It is green at first, then it ripens and shrinks and falls off, but all this time, the seed within gets stronger. The outer body will wither, will fall, but that is not the essential part of the fruit. The essential part, the soul, is the seed. It is the same with our bodies. Even as the body grows older, memory should grow stronger, and knowledge brighter. But this rarely happens. One says, " My memory is getting weaker these days." " Why ?" " Age is growing on me." Your wisdom, learning, memory—these are the seed. As the body becomes infirm with age, the soul grows correspondingly stronger. But this is impossible without one-pointedness.

(27) How to achieve one-pointedness

One-pointedness is of course necessary, but how does one come by it ? What should one do in order to get it ? The

Lord says one should fix the mind in the Self and " think of nothing else " (*na kinchidapi chintayet*).

But then, how is this to be done ? To make the mind perfectly calm is a great thing. Unless one stops with force the revolving wheel of thoughts, how can one attain one-pointedness ? Even if the outer wheel is somehow stopped, the inner wheel will go on revolving. As we, more and more, use external means to concentrate the mind, the inner wheels revolve all the faster. You may cross your legs, sit straight, and fix your gaze. But the mind won't become one-pointed because of this. The important thing is to be able to still the wheels of the mind.

The fact of the matter is, concentration is impossible, unless we keep within banks the *samsara* which fills and overflows our minds and the outer world. We should not, as we do now, expend the soul's boundless power of knowledge on trivial, external objects. Just as the man who has made his wealth not by robbing others, but by hard work, would not squander it, even so, we should not waste our power of knowledge by thinking of trivial things. Discrimination is a priceless treasure, and yet we spend it on gross matters. " This vegetable is not well-cooked ; it needs more salt." What if it lacks a pinch of salt, brother ? So much thought is spent on this great matter ! We teach children within the four walls of the schoolroom, because, under the trees, they would be distracted by crows and sparrows and would not be able to concentrate their minds. They are only children. So long as they do not see the birds, they concentrate their minds. We have grown big like horses. We have even got horns. Therefore, even if we are enclosed in a seven-walled city, our minds wander, for we go on discussing all the trifling little things in the world. The power of thought which can lead us to God, we are content to employ in talk of the taste of vegetables.

This fearful *samsara* is raging day and night all round us, within and without. Even in our prayer, the motive is outward benefit. We don't think of union with God, forgetting *samsara* for a moment. Even prayer is a mere show. When the mind is in this state, assuming a posture and shutting one's eyes are all in vain. Because the mind is forever running abroad, man's whole strength is lost. There is no kind of discipline or control in him. We see this at every step in our country. Indeed, our land is a dwelling place of the spirit. Our people are looked upon as having already wings with which to fly in the upper air. In such a land, what is my state and yours ? One is pained to see so much anxiety and so much discussion devoted to silly little matters. Our minds are immersed in triviality.

> " Sacred stories send us to sleep ;
> Care keeps us awake in bed.
> Obscure is the way of *karma* ;
> Why weep ? "

The mind is fixed on nothing, or on too many things. Nowhere do we see one-pointedness. What a slave to the senses is man ! Once, someone asked, " Why is it said that the eyes should be half-open and half-shut ? " I said, " The answer is easy. If you shut the eyes completely, you fall asleep. If you keep them fully open, they turn on all sides and prevent concentration. The sleep that comes to closed eyes is *tamas*. The manifold activity of wide-open eyes is *rajas*. Therefore the intermediate state is prescribed."

It means that, till the mind changes, no concentration is possible. The state of the mind should be pure, and this can't be achieved by assuming an erect posture. All our activity should be pure. To purify activity, its motive should be transformed. Activity should not be pursued for one's individual profit, for satisfying the instincts, or for outward objects.

All day long we are engaged in activities. What is the purpose of this day-long labour ?

" The purpose of all my effort
Is to make my last day sweet."

All this running about, this endless effort and toil, is it not because we want our final day on earth to be happy ? All the bitter sufferings of our life, what are they for ? To make the last moment, the moment of death, holy. Evening comes at end of day. If we have done all the work of the day with a pure heart, the evening prayer is sweet. If the last moment of the day is sweet, the day's work has found its reward. Then the mind easily becomes one-pointed.

For concentration, such purity of life is essential. Thought of outward objects should be avoided. Man's life is not long, but he has the power, even in this brief life, to taste the bliss of God. Two men may appear to be cast in the same mould—two eyes, a nose in between and two nostrils. Thus the two men are similar, and yet one is like a god, the other a beast. Why so ? Both are children of the same God—" all pots of the same clay "—but why this difference ? One can hardly believe they belong to the same species. While one is a God in human form, the other is a monkey !

Both in past ages and amongst us today, there have been men who know what heights man can rise to. This is a matter of experience. Now as in the past, there have been men to show what power there is in the human body. If man can achieve such miracles dwelling in the body, why then can I not ? Why should I set limits to my imagination ? I too have the same human body with which others have become heroes of humanity ; so why should I be in this plight ? I am making some mistake. My mind is always roaming abroad. It is so busy judging others. But where is the need for me to judge others ?

" Why look at the good and bad in others ;
Are my own faults few? "

If I am always absorbed in observing tiny little things in others, how can my mind become one-pointed ? In this condition, I can only be one of two things, asleep (in a state of nothingness) or distracted (at many points). I am caught in *tamas* or *rajas*.

It is true that the Lord tells us how to sit, how to direct the eyes and so on, to make the mind one-pointed. But it is only when we have first realised the need for one-pointedness, that these have value. Once a man is firmly convinced of the indispensability of one-pointedness, then he will seek and find for himself the means to attain it.

(28) Living within bounds

Another aid to concentration is to set bounds to one's life. All our actions must be measured and weighed. Precision, the secret of mathematics, should be found in all our actions. As we measure out each dose of medicine before taking it, our sleep and food too should be in measure. This should be so everywhere in our life. All our senses should be under strict watch, to see that we do not sleep too much, or eat too much, or even look at too many things.

One gentleman said of another, " When he enters a room, he notes in a second what things are kept in it, and where." I prayed within myself, " Lord, may I never have this power !" Am I his secretary, or am I a thief, that I should compile and keep in my head an inventory of his possessions ? How does it concern me where he keeps his soap or his watch ? Of what use is this knowledge to me ? We should stop employing our eyes thus uselessly. And we should restrain our ears as well. Some people seem to think that it would be wonderful to have ears like a dog's. Then they could turn in any direction we want. It is certainly a defect that our ears are fixed like this. But we don't need this useless power. As

it is, the mind is far too busy. The slightest noise, the slightest disturbance, and our minds are drawn to it. Therefore I say, establish order and discipline in your life. Let us not look at bad things, or read bad books. Let us not listen to ironical praise of others. Let us turn away not only from bad things, but also from innocent things beyond measure. Avoid greed of all kinds. Of course we should never have wine or pakoras or rasagullas, but even of bananas or oranges, we can have too many. Fruit is of course pure food, but even of that one can have too much. The master within will not tolerate the licence of the tongue. The senses should realise that the Lord within would surely punish them if they did what they liked. Disciplined conduct is called setting bounds to life.

(29) Friendly outlook

The third thing is a balanced outlook, which is the same thing as a friendly outlook. Without this, the mind cannot become one-pointed. The lion is the mighty king of the forest and yet he does not take four steps forward without looking behind. How can the lion, that lives by violence, attain concentration of mind ? The eyes of the lion, the crow and the cat constantly rove about. Their look shows fear and suspicion. Such is the state of animals that are violent. But we should develop a sense of equality. All creation should appear to us auspicious and friendly. I should trust all creatures as I trust myself. What have we to fear ? All things are pure, all things holy.

visvam tat bhadram yadavanti devaah.

This Universe is auspicious, full of goodness, because God looks after it. As Browning says,

" God's in his heaven——
All's right with the world ! "

Nothing is wrong in this world. If there is anything wrong, it is in my vision. As is my vision, so is the world. If I wear red glasses, the world too would appear red and aflame.

Ramdas, as he wrote his *Ramayan*, read it out to his students. Unknown to anyone, Hanuman too would come and sit among them, and listen to it. Samarth Ramdas had written, " Hanuman reached the *asoka*-grove, and he saw the white flowers there." Hearing this, Hanuman appeared suddenly and said, " I saw no white flowers ; the flowers I saw were red. What you have written is wrong. Correct it." Samarth insisted, " I have written right. The flowers you saw were white." Hanuman would not yield ; he said, " It was I that went there. Would I tell a lie ?" The dispute was at last taken to Sri Ramachandra. " The flowers were of course white," he said, " but Hanuman's eyes were red with anger, and saw the pure white as red." The point of this charming story is that what the world appears to us to be depends on the vision we take to it.

So long as we do not feel sure that the whole creation is auspicious, the mind will not be one-pointed. As long as we think that something is wrong with the world, we look at all things with suspicion. Poets sing of the happy freedom of birds, but let them try being a bird for a while. Then they would know what a bird's freedom is really worth. The neck of a bird dances back and forth all the time. It is ever afraid of others. If you put your bird on the seat of meditation, will it attain one-pointedness? If we approach it, it would fly away at once, afraid that we mean to kill it. Those whose minds are filled with the fearful idea that the whole world destroys and devours, what can they know of peace ? So long as the thought that I alone defend myself, and all others are devourers, does not leave the mind, there can be no one-pointedness. For this, the best means is the *bhavana*, the attitude, of equality. Once you start seeing friendliness everywhere, the mind will, of itself, attain peace.

Take an unhappy man to the banks of a clear running river. At the sight of the pure, calm, flowing water, he ceases to be

restless, he forgets his troubles. Whence did this moving water gain such power ? The benign power of God is manifested through this. The Vedas are full of beautiful descriptions of streams—

"*atishthantiinam anivesanaanaam*"—

Such are these streams. The stream flows without a break, it has no resting-place, no home of its own, it is a *sannyasi.* Such a pure stream calms my mind in a moment. When I look at such a lovely stream, will not a spring of love and wisdom well up in my heart ?

If this lifeless water without can confer such serenity on my mind, how much deeper the peace if, in the valley of the mind, there should spring up the living stream of *bhakti* and *jnana* !

Once a friend of mine was wandering in Kashmir, among the Himalayas. He used to write to me describing the holy mountains and lovely streams there. I replied to him, " These streams and mountain ranges and sweet air that give you peerless joy, I can experience them all in my heart. I behold these lovely sights constantly in the world within. That is why, though you invite me, I shall not leave behind the bliss of this divine Himalaya."

" *sthaavaraanaam himaalayah.*"

The Lord declared, " Among mountains I am Himalaya." One worships the Himalaya, the symbol of steadfastness, in order to attain steadfastness. And if on hearing its description, I deserted my post of duty, what would I gain ?

The meaning of it all is that we should calm the mind a little. If one looks at the world with friendly eyes, a perennial stream will spring in the heart, divine stars will shine in the inner firmament. When the mind gains peace from the sight of sacred objects made of stone and clay, will it not do so while contemplating the sights of the world within the heart ? Once, during a visit to Trivandrum, I was sitting on the beach.

The boundless sea, its majestic roaring and the evening hour quietened my mind, and I sat still. My friend brought me some fruit to eat. But at that time, even this *sattvik*, this innocent food, was like poison to me. The roaring " Om, Om " of the sea reminded me of the phrase from the Gita : " *maamanusmara yuddhya cha*," " Remember me and fight on ". The sea was constantly remembering and naming the Lord, and at the same time doing its work. A wave came forward ; it went back, and then another. The sea had not a moment's rest. At sight of this, my hunger and thirst disappeared. When you come to think of it, what is there in the sea ? If the sight of the salt sea waves rising and falling could make my heart rejoice, how would I dance with joy when the unfathomable ocean of my heart throws up waves of wisdom and love ! The waves of this ocean were beating in the heart of the Vedic seer—

> " *antah samudre hrdi antaraayushi*
> *ghrtasya dhaaraa abhichaakasiimi*
> *samudraa uurmir madhumaan udaarat.*"

The commentators have found it difficult to explain this divine language. What are these streams of ghee and honey rising within the heart ? Will waves of brine rise in the ocean of my heart ? No, no. In the ocean of my heart, waves of milk, honey, ghee, are beating.

(30) Child-preceptor

Learn to behold this ocean of the heart. Look up at the cloudless sky outside and make the heart clear and pure. To tell the truth, one-pointedness of mind is child's play, an ordinary thing. It is distraction of mind that is unnatural, artificial. Look steadily into the eyes of a little child. While it looks at you intently, you have blinked a dozen times. Children's minds become easily one-pointed. Show a little child, four or five months old, the rich greenness of Nature without. It will gaze intently on it. Mothers think that,

if a child looks at green trees and plants, even its motions are green. It is as if all its senses are in its eyes when it looks through them. Any little incident makes a powerful impression on the child's mind. Educationists regard the first three or four years of a child's education as the really effective part of education. No matter how many Universities, or High Schools or Cultural Associations you establish, one never gets again what one had in the first few years. I have had something to do with education. Day by day, my conviction becomes stronger that the effect of this formal education is just nothing. The impressions formed in the earliest years are set as in hard cement. Later education is like superficial plastering or the colour-wash outside. By using soap and water, you can wash off dirt from the body, but how to wash off the colour of one's skin ? Thus the first impressions are hard to remove.

How is it that the first impressions are so strong, and the later ones weak ? It is because in childhood one-pointedness of mind comes naturally. Because of this one-pointedness of mind, impressions then received are indelible. Such is the power of one-pointedness. There is nothing impossible for those who have it.

To-day our whole life has become artificial. Our childhood is lost to us. There is no richness, no real joy in life ; it has dried up. We act waywardly, capriciously. It is not Darwin but we ourselves that prove by our actions that the ape is our ancestor.

The little child is trustful. Its mother's word is its authority. It never occurs to it to question the truth of the stories it hears. " The crow said, " " The sparrow said,"—all this sounds true to the child. Because of this innocence and friendliness, the child becomes easily one-pointed.

(31) Practice, detachment, faith

For *dhyana-yoga* (the way of meditation), it is thus seen that one-pointedness of mind, disciplined living and a friendly and balanced outlook are necessary. Besides these, two other aids, detachment and practice, are mentioned. The first is negative and destructive, the other, positive and constructive. To remove and throw away the weeds in the field is destructive work—this is *vairagya*, detachment. To sow seeds in the field is constructive work. To think good thoughts again and again is *abhyasa*, practice. *Vairagya* is negative, *abhyasa* is positive work. How to acquire *vairagya* ? The mango, we say, is sweet. But is this sweetness only in the fruit ? No, it is not in the fruit alone. We pour the sweetness of the Self into objects, and then they taste sweet. Therefore, learn to taste the sweetness within. The sweetness of external objects is not in themselves. But the sweetness of all sweet things, " *rasaanaam rasatamah*," the sea of this sweetness, is the Self within me. As I go on meditating that all sweet objects gain their sweetness from the Self, *vairagya* fills the mind. Mother Sita gave a pearl necklace to Hanuman. Hanuman, pulling out the pearls, bit them one by one, tasted each and threw it away. In none of them could he find Rama. Rama was in his heart. For these same pearls, people give even lakhs of rupees !

In describing *dhyana-yoga*, the Lord has taught us an important lesson at the very beginning. And that is, that one should make a firm resolve, " I have to raise myself by my own effort. But I shall rise ; I shall reach the heavens. I shall not lie helpless in this human body. I shall dare to approach God, and make all the effort needed for it."

Listening to all this, Arjuna had a doubt. He said, " My days are over, Lord. If in a short while I die, what is the use of all this *sadhana*, this practice ?" The Lord replied, " Death is only a long sleep." Every day, after working hard, we sleep

seven or eight hours. Is anyone afraid of this sleep ? We worry only when we do not get sleep. Like sleep, death too is necessary. Just as we wake up from sleep and resume our work, our former *sadhana* will avail us even after death. Jnanadev in his *Jnanesvari* has written some verses in this context which seem to reveal his own inner life.

" All knowledge came of itself in childhood, all the *sastras* sprang into speech of their own accord."

These lines show how the *abhyasa* of a former birth draws you. The minds of some are not drawn to the objects of sense. They do not know what *moha*, delusion, is. For, they have, in a former birth, completed their *sadhana*, their preparation. The Lord gives the assurance, " One who treads the path of righteousness, my son, will never come to grief." His effort will not be wasted. We are given this faith at the end of the Chapter. What is imperfect shall be made perfect. Accept this teaching of the Lord and make your life fruitful.

CHAPTER VII

PRAPATTI, OR SURRENDER TO GOD

(32) The sublime vision of bhakti

Brothers, when Arjuna faced the problem of maintaining his *svadharma*, his mind was perplexed by the illusion of "mine" and "not mine," and he began to seek ways to escape his *svadharma*. This futile illusion of his was shown in the First Chapter. The Second Chapter set out to remove this illusion. That the soul is indestructible and all-pervading, that the body is transient, and that one should never give up one's *svadharma*—these three principles were stated there. The method of realising these principles was also taught ; this technique is the renunciation of the fruits of action. In explaining this *karma-yoga*, three things—*karma*, *vikarma* and *akarma*—emerged. In the Fifth Chapter, we saw the two aspects of *akarma* produced by the union of *karma* and *vikarma*. From the Sixth Chapter onwards, the varieties of *vikarma* are described. In the Sixth Chapter was explained the importance of one-pointedness for the *sadhaka*, the seeker.

Today we deal with the Seventh Chapter. This Chapter, one might say, opens out a beautiful new mansion of *vikarma*. As one reads the *Gita*, one gets the impression of being in the temple of Nature, of walking through a mighty forest, seeing many beautiful sights. In the Sixth Chapter we dwelt in the mansion of one-pointedness ; now we shall enter another mansion.

Before throwing open the doors of this mansion, the Lord makes us understand the secret of the structure of this enticing world. On the same kind of paper and with the same brush, an artist paints a variety of pictures. The *vina*-player, out of seven notes, makes so many different *ragas*. With the few letters in the alphabet, we express an endless variety of

thoughts and feelings. Look on this creation too in the same light. There are in it innumerable objects, and many modes of being. But all this exterior and interior creation is made up of two things—the indivisible *atman* and the eightfold forms of Nature. The anger of the angry man, the love of the lover, the agony of the sufferer, the happiness of the happy one, the drowsiness of the idler, the activity of the worker—all these are the play of the same power of *chaitanya*, Intelligence. At the root of all these contradictory movements, and filling them all, is a single Intelligence. As the Intelligence within is one, so too is the outer veil single in its nature. The Lord tells us in the beginning that all creation is born of conscious *atman* and inert Nature.

While everywhere spirit and body, the supernatural and the natural, are thus one, why is man caught in illusion ? Why does he see difference ? While the face of the loving man is pleasant to look at, the sight of another fills us with disgust. Why are we attracted by one and repelled by the other ? The same pencil, the same paper, the same artist ; and yet the various pictures reveal various kinds of emotion. The skill of the artist lies precisely here. There is a skill in the fingers of the painter or the *vina*-player that makes us laugh and cry. All the magic is in the fingers of the artist.

This man is near to me, the other distant ; this is mine, that is his—such thoughts arise in our minds, and on occasion deflect us from our duty, all because of illusion. If we are to escape this illusion, we should learn the secret of the creative skill of the Lord's fingers. The *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* gives the drum (*dundubhi*) as an example. The same drum gives out many kinds of sound. Some frighten me, others make me dance. If I am to master all these emotions, I have to catch hold of the drummer. Once he is in our hands, all the notes too are in our hands. In one word the Lord says, " Those who wish to cross *maya*, let them take refuge in me."

"Only those who are surrendered to me will escape the play of *maya* ; for them, the waters of *maya* dry up here and now."

What then is this that we call "*maya*" ? The power of God, His art, the skill of His hand—this is what we call *maya*. *Maya* is nothing but the power of the art of the Creator who out of *atman* and *prakrti* (Spirit and Nature),—or, in Jain terminology, *jiva* and *ajiva* (the living and the non-living)—out of these materials, formed this many-coloured world. Just as in the jail out of the same grain they make bread as well as the *dal* that tastes of everything, in the same way, out of the indivisible spirit and the eightfold body, the Lord creates an endless variety of things. Seeing this, we experience many contradictory emotions of good and bad. If we wish to transcend these diversities and attain true peace, we should try and catch hold of the maker of them all, and become friends with him. It is only when we come to know him that we can escape the illusion which causes diversity and desire.

In the Seventh Chapter, the Lord has thrown open the beautiful mansion of *bhakti*, the powerful *vikarma*, the effective means, for knowing Him. To attain purity of mind many *vikarmas* are prescribed, like *yajna* and *dana* (sacrifice and gifts), *japa* and *tapas* (prayer and penance), *dhyana* and *dharana* (meditation and concentration). These means I should compare with washing soda and soap. But *bhakti* is the water. Without water these other things are useless ; but even without these, water can cleanse. If we had them too, it would be as if sugar fell into milk by accident. If in *yajna*, *yaga*, *dhyana* and *tapas* the heart does not enter, how can purity of mind result ? It is the involvement of the heart that is *bhakti*.

Bhakti is essential to all kinds of effort. It is the universal method. If a trained nurse, attending on a patient, has not

the *bhavana,* the mental attitude of service, how could it be true service ? If a bullock is strong, but is not inclined to draw the cart, he will hang his head and lie down, or even overturn it in a ditch. In work without heart, there is neither strength nor satisfaction.

(33) Pure joy through bhakti

If we have *bhakti,* we can see the skill of the great artist, the brush in his hand. If once we taste the rare sweetness of the stream at its source, all other pleasures become flat and insipid. A man who has tasted real bananas would not be taken in by bananas of painted wood or clay, however beautiful. A man who tasted the sweetness of a mountain stream would not care for syrups.

Once, some people said to a philosopher, " There is a festival of lamps in the city today. Let us go and see it." He replied, " What, after all, is this festival of lights ? One lamp, then another, then a third, and so on, a lakh, a million, a crore—as many as you please. And that is your festival." In an arithmetical progression like $1 + 2 + 3$.................. going on to infinity, once we know the difference between one term and the next in the series, there is no need to write it all down. These lamps are arranged one after the other ; what is there in it to get so excited about ? But then, man likes this sort of pleasure. He squeezes a lemon, and mixes sugar and water with the juice, sips it and smacks his lips and exclaims, " How delightful this drink is ! " What else has the tongue to do, except to taste ? We blend all sorts of tastes—and its whole pleasure is in tasting them. When I was a boy, I once went to the cinema. I took with me a piece of sacking in case I wanted to sleep. On the screen appeared dazzling pictures of fire, which in a few minutes tired my eyes out. I went to sleep, asking my neighbour to wake me up when the show was over. Instead of going out into the open air at night, and looking up at the moon and

the stars in the sky, and enjoying the holy peace of Nature, why do people get cooped up in threatres and watch and applaud the dance of these fiery figures? I never could understand this.

Why is man so joyless ? The poor fellow finds some sort of pleasure in these lifeless figures. When there is no joy in life, people go in for such artificial amusements. Once I heard drums beating in the neighbourhood. I enquired what it was for, and was told that a child had been born. What is there so special about your having a child that you should announce it to the world with beat of drums ? Is it not childish to celebrate a child-birth with all this dancing and singing and mirth ? It is as if the world is famished for joy. Just as in a famine people rush in a frenzy at the sight of grain, so we, hungry for joy, make a lot of fuss when a child or a cinema or a circus arrives.

Is this true joy ? Waves of music enter the ear and impinge on the mind ; forms impinge on the mind through the eyes. For these poor folk, all pleasure consists in these impacts. While one man sniffs in powdered tobacco, another rolls it into a *beedi* and inserts it into his mouth. And when the snuff or the smoke hits them they feel they have a cart-load of pleasure. Their joy knows no bounds when they pick up a cigarette end. Tolstoy says, " A man might even commit murder under the influence of cigarettes." It is a kind of intoxication.

Why does man lose himself in such pleasures ? Because he does not know where his true joy lies. Man is beguiled by shadows. Now he derives his pleasure only from his five senses. If he did not have the sense of sight, he would imagine that the world offers only four kinds of pleasures. If to-morrow a man came down from Mars with six senses, these poor people with only five would cry in sorrow, " Compared to him, how despicable we are!"

How can the full meaning of the universe be apprehended by these five senses? Even among the objects of these five senses, man chooses only a few, and is lost in them. When the donkey's braying reaches his ear, he says in disgust, "What an inauspicious noise!" But is not the sight of you inauspicious to the donkey? If it hurts you, do you never hurt others, even granting that the braying of the donkey is inauspicious? When I was studying in Baroda College, some celebrated European musicians visited the College. No doubt they sang marvellously, but since I was not used to that kind of singing, I sat there wondering when I could escape this infliction. I decided that they did not deserve to pass. And when our singers go abroad, they too would perhaps be esteemed in this fashion. Some find joy in music, others don't. Which means that this is not true joy, but illusory. Until we experience true joy, we shall toss up and down on these deceptive pleasures. Till Asvatthama tasted genuine milk, he was satisfied with flour mixed in water. Once we have seen the true nature of the universe, and tasted its joy, we shall find these other pleasures insipid.

The best way to discover this joy is *bhakti*. As we go along this path, we shall discover the skill of the Lord. When we reach this divine image, all other images disappear of themselves. Then you will not be attracted by anything trivial. Then you will see that the whole world is filled with pure joy. Though there are hundreds of sweetmeat shops, they are filled with the same sweets. Until the real thing comes to our hands, we are like restless birds pecking at this and that. I was reading the *Tulasi-Ramayan* in the morning. There was a cloud of moths surrounding the lamp. Just then, a lizard appeared. What interest had it in the *Ramayan*? But the sight of the moths was sheer joy. As it was about to pounce on the insects, I moved my hand, and it ran away. Even then its attention was concentrated

on the moths. I thought within myself, "Would you eat these insects ? Does your mouth water at the sight of them ?" No, my mouth did not water. What could the poor lizard know of the joy that I was experiencing ? It could not taste the sweetness of the *Ramayan.* Our condition is not very different from that of the lizard. We are intoxicated by a multitude of enjoyments. But when we find true joy, how sweet it would taste ! The Lord has shown us the way of *bhakti ;* through this we can reach and taste the true joy.

(34) Even bhakti born of desire has value

The Lord speaks of three kinds of devotee (*bhakta*)—(1) *sakama bhakta,* one who prays for something, (2) the disinterested but partial *bhakta,* and (3) the *jnani,* the seer, or the perfect *bhakta.* The disinterested but partial *bhakta* is of three kinds,—(1) the afflicted, (2) the seeker after knowledge and (3) the seeker of meaning and purpose. These are the branches and twigs of the tree of *bhakti.*

What is meant by *sakama bhakti,* interested *bhakti* ? It is approaching the Lord with some desire in the heart. I do not despise this as a low form of *bhakti.* Many people render public service for name and fame. What is wrong in that ? Give them honour ; you will do no harm by it. Because they receive honour they will get confirmed in service ; and then they will begin to find joy in their work. This desire for recognition, what does it mean ultimately ? Through recognition, one gets the faith that what one is doing is right. One who has no inward means of deciding whether his service is good or bad, such a one accepts this external test. When the mother pats the child on the back and says, "Well done, my child !", the child wants to help all the more. The *sakama bhakta* too is like that. He could go straight to the Lord, and say, "Give," asking for what he

wants. The habit of going to the Lord and asking Him for whatever one wants is not common. It is something rare.

Jnanadev asked Namadev, " Will you go with me on a pilgrimage ? " Namadev said, " But why ? " Jnanadev answered, " We shall meet saints and good men." Namadev said, " Then I shall ask the Lord and come." Namadev went to the temple and stood before the Lord. Tears flowed from his eyes. His eyes were fixed on the feet of the Lord. At last, he asked, sobbing, " Lord, am I to go ? " Jnanadev stood by his side all the time. Would you call Namadev a mad man ? There are lots of people who cry because their wives are away. But the *bhakta* who goes to the Lord and weeps, even if it is only because he wants something, is rare. That he does not demand what he ought to demand, this only shows his ignorance ; but just because of this, it would be wrong to regard his interested *bhakti* as something unworthy and to be rejected.

Women get up early in the morning and perform a number of rites; they light lamps, go round the *tulasi* plant and so on. What for ? So that after death they can get the grace of God. This faith may be simple, but for its sake they observe prayer and fasting and other vows. Among people who live such devoted lives, great souls are born. Ramatirtha was born in the line of Tulasidas. He was a scholar in the Persian language. Some one told him, " How is it that you, born in the line of Tulasidas, don't know Sanskrit ? " This went straight to his heart. Such is the effect of remembering one's ancestry ! Impelled by it, he took up the serious study of Sanskrit. We should not make light of the piety of women. Where these little drops of piety gather, illustrious children are born. Therefore the Lord says, " I confirm the devotion even of the interested *bhakta*. I will not confuse him. If he prays with true heart that his illness should go, I will confirm his will to health, and cure him of his illness.

No matter with what motive he comes to me, I will welcome him with love." Think of Dhruva. When he was refused a place in his father's lap, his mother told him, " Ask the Lord for a place." Dhruva was absorbed in prayer, and the Lord gave him a fixed abode. (He is the Pole Star.) Even if the mind is not desireless, does it matter ? The important thing is whom one approaches, from whom one begs. There is greatness in begging from the Lord rather than from the world.

Whatever the excuse, enter the temple of *bhakti.* Though in the beginning you enter it with a motive, you will later become disinterested. Those who conduct khadi exhibitions plead with people, " Do come in and take a look. Look at the fine texture, the bright colours, the beautiful patterns." Once they come in, they are converted. *Bhakti* too is like that. Once you enter its temple, you will discover its beauty and power for yourself.

When Dharmaputra reached at last the gates of heaven, there was only a dog with him. Bhima, Arjuna and the others had fallen by the wayside. He was told, " You can come in, but the dog is not allowed to enter." Dharma answered, " If my dog cannot enter, neither will I." One who performs devoted service, even if it is only a dog, is superior to those who are always thinking of themselves. The dog proved its superiority even to Bhima and Arjuna. Even a worm that moves towards God is greater than the greatest of men who have not turned towards Him. In the temple there are images of the tortoise and the bull, and everyone bows before the bull. Why ? Because it is not an ordinary bull, because it stays before the Lord. Even if it is a bull, we cannot forget that it is the Lord's bull. It is greater than the wisest of men. Even a dull creature, if it thinks of the Lord, earns the reverence of the universe.

I was once travelling in a train. It was passing over a bridge across the Jumna. A passenger sitting next to me flung with great enthusiasm a coin into the river. There was a rationalist in the compartment who observed, "The country is poverty-stricken, and on top of that, there are people who throw coins out of carriage windows." "You have not understood why he does it," I said. "The *bhavana*, the mental attitude with which he threw the coin, is worth at least two or three such coins, is it not ? If the money had been given for some good cause, it would no doubt have been better. We shall think about it later. But then, he was moved to do this because of the feeling that this is not a mere river, but the Lord's compassion flowing before us. Is there any room for this feeling in your Economics ? When his eyes saw one of his country's rivers, his heart melted. If you can assess in terms of money the value of this feeling, then I shall know how to estimate your patriotism." Does love of country mean mere bread ? If on seeing one of the great rivers of one's country, the idea awakes in one's mind that one should immerse all one's possessions in it, and dedicate them to it, how great is that love ! All that wealth, those discs of gold and silver, the pearls excreted by the oyster, the hardened coal which we call diamonds—they are indeed worthy of being thrown into the waters. Regard them as dust at the feet of the Lord. You may wonder what is the connection between a river and the feet of the Lord. In your creation, has the Lord a place? The river is a combination of oxygen and hydrogen. The sun is a big kind of gas-lamp. Why worship these ? One should therefore bow low before this loaf of bread. But what is there even in this loaf of bread ? Even that, if you go into it, is a kind of white earth. Why does your mouth water at the sight of it ? Here is the big bright sun just risen, here is the beautiful river flowing past—if you do not see God in them, where can you see Him ? Wordsworth laments,—

"The Rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose,
The sunshine is a glorious birth ;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth."

He says with great sorrow, "My heart used to leap up when I beheld a rainbow in the sky, it used to dance with the daffodils; but why does it dance no more ? Have I lost the sweetness of life and become a stone ?"

The truth is that even selfish *bhakti*, even superstitious reverence, has high value. In the end, a great power will spring from them. No matter what sort of a person one is, if one goes once into the presence of the Lord, one becomes worthy of honour. No matter what sort of wood is thrown into the fire, it will burn. Devotion to the Lord, *bhakti*, is a wonderful means for attaining Him. He rejoices even in the devotion that is accompanied by desire. In due course, such *bhakti* becomes desireless and tends towards perfection.

(35) Disinterested bhakti—its varieties and fullness

We have seen the *sakama bhakta*, the devotee with a motive. We now turn to the *nishkama bhakta*, the disinterested *bhakta*. Even of this *bhakti* there are two kinds—the partial and the whole. Of the partial devotees again, there are three kinds.

The first is the afflicted devotee. They seek the compassion of the Lord, sobbing and crying and restless for Him, like Namadev. They are eager, sorrow-stricken, desperate, and agitated, thinking, "When shall I taste the nectar of the Lord's love, when shall I embrace Him and fulfil my life's purpose, when shall I throw myself at His feet and be one of the blessed ?" They look in every action for truth, sincerity, yearning and love.

The second kind are the seekers of wisdom. There are not many such in our country today. Such a devotee of truth would attempt again and again to climb Gaurisankar and perish in the attempt ; he would go in search of the North Pole and after writing down his discoveries on a piece of paper, and sealing it in a bottle which he leaves floating on the waters, he dies ; he would descend into the womb of a volcano. We Indians today are terribly afraid of death. We have no higher ideal in life than looking after our family. In the seeker after wisdom, there is an irrepressible hunger for knowledge, an eagerness to know the truth. He will investigate the nature and qualities of everything. As one by following the river comes at last to the sea, the seeker after knowledge reaches the Lord.

The third kind of *bhakta* seeks meaning and purpose (*artha*), in all things. "*Artha*" here does not mean money or wealth, it only means welfare and happiness. The test he applies to every action, the touch-stone, is ," How will society benefit ?" Whatever he speaks, writes, or does, he would make sure that it does good, not harm, to the world. He would never agree to anything that is useless or harmful. One who wishes for the world's welfare is indeed a *mahatma*. His whole happiness is in the welfare of the world.

The first kind of *bhakta*, the afflicted one, looks at the whole world through eyes of love ; the second kind, the seeker of knowledge, through the eye of discovery ; and the third, the seeker of meaning, from the point of view of the world's welfare.

Though these three kinds of *bhaktas* are all disinterested, still they are one-sided. One reaches the Lord through *karma*, the second through love, the third through knowledge. What remains is the perfect *bhakta*, and he may be called the *jnani-bhakta*, the seer-saint. All that he sees he regards as forms of God. In the ugly as in the handsome person,

in the beggar as in the king, in men, women, animals and birds, everywhere he sees only the pure presence of God. Tukaram prays, " Make my mind such, Oh Lord, that it sees men, women and children, all as Narayana." We have in Hinduism such mad rites as the worship of the serpent, the elephant-headed God, and trees ; but we see greater madness in the seer-saints. From the ant to the sun and the moon, in all that they see, everywhere, they behold the Lord, and in their hearts beat the waves of the ocean of joy. " An endless, boundless bliss, a sea of joy, wells up."

This divine and beautiful vision, you may call an illusion if you like. But this illusion is a source of comfort, a fund of joy. In the majestic ocean he sees the grandeur of the Lord, in Mother Cow he sees the mother-like tenderness of God, in the earth he sees His patience, in the clear sky His purity, in sun, moon and stars, His brightness and beauty. In the flower he sees His softness, and in evil men, the Lord who tests and tries us. Thus he practises the art of seeing the one God at play everywhere, and doing so, one day, the seer-saint merges into the Lord.

CHAPTER VIII

ACHIEVING THE GOAL—THE YOGA OF CONSTANCY

(36) Developing good samskaras

Human life is full of the play of *samskaras*—tendencies developed by repeated actions. Innumerable actions are going on through us all the time. If we started counting them, we should never come to an end. Even if we take a superficial look at the activities that go on in twenty-four hours, do you realise how huge the number would be ? Eating, drinking, sitting, sleeping, walking, wandering, a little work, writing, talking, reading—besides these, how many dreams, likes and dislikes, honour and dishonour, pain and pleasure, in endless variety ! And they all leave associations, build up tendencies in the mind. Hence, if someone asks me what life is, I should explain it as an aggregate of *samskaras*.

Samskaras can be bad as well as good. And they both have their effects on human life. We cannot even recollect the actions of our infancy ; our childhood is like something written on a slate and rubbed off. The *samskaras* of a former birth are like writing completely rubbed out—so much so that one wonders whether there was a former birth at all. When we do not remember our childhood even in this birth, why talk of previous births ? Never mind former births ; let us think of this one. It is not as if only those things which we remember took place. Many are the things done, and many the things known ; but all this action and knowledge disappear, leaving only a trace of *samskara* behind. If when we go to bed at night we try to recollect all our actions of the day, they don't all come back. What actions do come back before our mind's eye ? Only those which were vivid and distinct. If we had a quarrel with someone, the impres-

sion lasts, for that was the day's earnings. Important and distinct actions leave a deep impression on the mind ; other actions fade away from memory. When we write a diary, we mention only two or three outstanding events. When from these daily accounts we make up a weekly summary, many even of these will drop out, and only the most outstanding events remain. In the same way, in a month or six months, in a year or five years, very few outstanding events alone remain in the memory and it is these which form our *samskara*. Though innumerable actions take place, and endless knowledge is acquired, in the end, the mind retains very little of it all. All those various actions, all that varied knowledge, came along, and did their work and disappeared. Out of all this action only a few lasting *samskaras* are left. And these form our capital. We conduct the business of life and accumulate *samskara*. The merchant keeps his daily, monthly and annual accounts of income and expenditure, and at the end arrives at the single figure of profit or loss ; in the course of our lives, we enter on the credit side various *samskaras*, but at the end a single, firm, clear figure remains in the account. In the last moments of life the soul begins to think of this final figure. As it looks back on all the achievements of a life-time, it realises that the gains are just two or three things. This does not mean that all those actions and all that knowledge have been wasted. They have done their work, and that is all. After the thousands of transactions, the nett result is just a loss of five thousand rupees, or a profit of ten thousand rupees. If there is a loss his heart sinks, and if there is a gain it bounds with joy.

We too are in the same position. If at the moment of death one wants something to eat, that is conclusive proof that all our lives we have trained ourselves but to please the palate. All that we have laid up in a long life is a taste for eating and drinking—this is the *vasana* we carry over. If a

mother at the moment of death thinks of her child, we may take it that her strongest *samskara* is love of her child ; all her other innumerable actions, it is clear, are secondary. In arithmetic we are familiar with problems in proper fractions; but however big the figures, when we reduce them, the result approximates to zero or one. In the same way, a single powerful *samskara* alone remains at last as the essential thing. This is the answer to the problem of life. The thought arising in the final moment is the fruit of the whole of one's life.

All the efforts of life should be guided by the idea that this final fruit should be full of sweetness, that the last moment should be blissful. When the end is sweet, all else is sweet. We should fix the mind on this final answer while solving the problems of life. Plan the whole of life with this ideal in view. In arriving at the answer to a problem, we should keep the main issue in mind. We should direct the current of our lives in such a way that we strengthen the *samskara* which we wish to be firm in the last moment of our lives. Our whole attention should be turned in that direction, day and night.

(37) Remember the moment of death

In this Chapter it is stated that the thought that is uppermost at the moment of death prevails in the succeeding birth. The soul sets out for the journey ahead, with this provision for the way. Taking today's earnings with us, after a night's sleep, we begin tomorrow. In the same way, with the accumulations of this life, after the heavy sleep of death, we resume the journey in the next birth. The end of this *janma* is the beginning of the next. Walk through life having in mind the hour of death.

This is necessary also because we should conquer the fear of death and make it easy to cross over. There is a story about Eknath. A man asked him, " Maharaj, your life is

so simple and sinless. Why is our life utterly different ? You are angry with none, you quarrel with none, you hate none. How calm, how loving, how pure you are !" Eknath replied, " Never mind me. I have found out something about you. In seven days from now, you will die." Who could disbelieve Eknath's words ? Death in seven days ? Only 168 hours left. Oh, God, what a calamity ! He ran in haste to his house. Nothing seemed clear to him. He was talking of disposing of his affairs and preparing for the end. Then he fell ill. He lay flat on his bed. Six days passed. On the seventh day, Eknath came to visit him. He greeted the saint. Eknath enquired, " How are you ?" He said, " All is over. Now I am going." Eknath asked further, " In these six days, how many sins did you commit ? And how many sinful thoughts came into your mind ?" And the man who had been awaiting death answered, " Lord, where was the time to think of evil thoughts ? Death stood ever before my eyes." Eknath said, " Now you know the reason, don't you, why our lives are absolutely sinless ? When Death the Lion stands always before us, how can evil thoughts appear ? Even to sin, one needs freedom from anxiety. Constantly thinking of death is a means of avoiding sin. If death is always staring him in the face, with what strength can man commit sin ? "

But man tries to push away the thought of death. The French philosopher Pascal says in his *Pensees* (" Thoughts "), " As men are not able to fight against death, misery, ignorance, they have taken it into their heads, in order to be happy, not to think of them at all.................To be happy he would have to make himself immortal ; but, not being able to do so, it has occurred to him to prevent himself from thinking of death."

" Death is always standing behind us. But man's effort to forget it goes on all the time. He never considers how to

live remembering death." Man does not like even the word, "Death." If at dinner the word is uttered, we cut it short saying, "How inauspicious !" But every step we take is a step that takes us towards death. Once we buy a ticket to Bombay and sit in the train, though we keep sitting, the train will carry us to Bombay and deliver us there. At birth we take a ticket to the destination, death. Whether we sit still or run about, death is certain. Whether we think of it or do not think of it, it will come. However uncertain all other things are, death is certain. As the sun sets on the western hill, it has devoured a portion of our life. Thus our days decrease, life tapers off, drop by drop the cup is emptied—but man takes no notice of all this. Jnaneswar says, "How curious !" He wonders how men could be so thoughtless. Man has become so frightened of death that he cannot bear even the thought of it. He tries to keep off all thought of it. He sits down bandaging his eyes. Soldiers going to the front play, dance, sing and smoke, to forget death. Pascal writes, "The only thing which consoles us for our miseries is diversion, and yet this is the greatest of our miseries. For it is this which principally hinders us from reflecting upon ourselves, and which makes us insensibly ruin ourselves.........Diversion amuses us, and leads us unconsciously to death."

"Though he sees death everywhere, the soldier loses himself in eating and drinking, singing and dancing, all in order to forget it."

We are all like the soldier. Keeping a round, laughing face, if it is withered, applying cream and powder, and dyeing grey hair—all this, man does. Death is dancing on our chest, but we try endlessly to put it out of our minds. We are ready to talk about all other things, but not about death. You ask a boy who has just passed his Matriculation, "What do you propose to do ?" He replies, "Don't ask me now ; I am only in my first year at College." If you ask him again the

following year, he would say, " Let me first finish the Intermediate ; there will be time enough to worry." And so it goes on. But shouldn't one think in advance of the future ? Should not one see the path in front clearly before taking a step, to avoid pitfalls ? But the student shirks this task. What the poor fellow studies only serves to shed darkness on the path ahead. So he takes good care not to ask the question what he could do in life. He may be surrounded by darkness on all sides, but he cannot prevent what is bound to come ; it will surely come about.

The Professor of Logic begins Deduction at College : " Man is mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore Socrates is mortal." But why bring in Socrates ; why not cite his own example ? The Professor too is mortal. But he never says, " All men are mortal. Therefore I, the Professor, am mortal, and you the students too are mortal." He passes on to Socrates the liability to die, for Socrates, luckily, is already dead. He is not likely now to stand up and protest. So the teacher and the pupils establish the mortality of Socrates, and as for themselves, enter into a conspiracy of silence. They fancy that they have warded off danger thus.

In this way, people are all the time making heroic efforts to forget death. But can one ever get rid of death by such means ? Only the other day, when my mother died, death stood before me. But there is a way of conquering death by thinking fearlessly about it ; but this way we dare not seek and find. A lion pursues a deer. The nimble deer flees in fright, but soon it gets tired, and its strength fails. But Death in the form of the lion pursues it. The state of the poor creature at that moment is indeed pitiable—it cannot even look at the lion. It buries its antlers and face in the earth, and stands helpless, as if inviting the lion to come and devour it. We too dare not face death. But although we try all tricks to run away from it, it is powerful enough to catch us at last by our neck.

And when death comes, man takes stock of his life's accounts. The stupid and lazy candidate dips his pen in the inkpot and takes it out, but he cannot collect enough courage to blacken the paper. My fellow, do you mean to start writing, or don't you ? Surely, you don't expect Saraswati to take the pen out of your hand and write for you ? Alas, the three hours are over ; and he folds and submits the paper blank, or with a few lines scrawled on it. It does not occur to him to try to understand the questions and answer them. He wastes his time looking this way and that. Our plight too is no different. Therefore, remembering that death is the crown of life, we should constantly practise the means by which we can make our last moments holy, pure and sweet. From now on we should think what we should do to impress on our minds the most noble and beautiful *samskaras*. But who worries about acquiring good *samskaras* ? Instead of this, day and night, the training in bad ways goes on. We teach the tongue, the eyes and the ears to be greedy. We should give a far different training to the *chitta*, the mind and heart. We should steep and dye the *chitta* in good things. From the instant we discover an error, we should try and correct it. Once we know it is a mistake, how can we go on doing it ? The moment we discover a mistake, we are reborn. Then begins for us a new childhood, a new dawn in life. Now we are truly awake. From now on we should examine our life day and night and walk warily. Else we shall slip, and fall into bad habits again.

Many years ago I went on a visit to my old grandmother. She complained, " Vinya, I remember nothing these days. I go to fetch the ghee-pot, and then come back forgetting all about it." But she talked to me about some trouble about a jewel which occurred fifty years earlier. She could not remember what happened five minutes before, but something fifty years old was still fresh in her memory. How to account

for this ? She must have been talking about the jewel affair again and again to a great many people—and therefore, it had become a part of her life. I prayed within myself, " Oh God, don't let my grandmother think of the jewel at the time of death !"

(38) Be forever steeped in it

The thing we practise day and night sticks to us. Let us not be deceived by the story of Ajamila. He was to all appearances a sinner, but hidden deep in his life was a stream of holiness. This came to the surface at the moment of death. If you imagine that you would remember the name of Rama at the last moment, even if you had been a sinner all your life, you are sure to be disappointed. You will have to train the mind aright from childhood. Take constant care that good *samskaras* alone come to the mind. Don't say, " What does it matter whether one gets up at four in the morning or at seven ?" Talk of this sort is pointless. By letting the mind go as it pleases, you will defeat yourself. Then you will never acquire good *samskaras*. We have to accumulate wealth coin by coin ; we must gather wisdom without wasting even a moment. Watch, therefore, that only good *samskaras* take root in the mind. Any bad word that comes out of your mouth starts an evil *samskara*. Every act is a stroke that chisels into shape the marble of our life. Even if the day passes well, evil thoughts disturb our dreams. It is not as if only the affairs of the immediate past appear in dreams. So many *samskaras* lie hidden in our minds behind the veil of forgetfulness. We cannot tell when they will come out into the open. Therefore, we should be vigilant even over little things. A drowning man clutches even at a straw. And we are drowning in the ocean of *samsara*. If we utter a good word, even that serves as a support to us. A good deed done is never wasted ; it will take you ashore. There should not be even the slightest trace of a bad *samskara*·

Strive always to keep the eyes pure, the ears closed against blame, the tongue engaged in good speech. If you are thus careful, you will draw a good prize at the time of death. We will become the masters of life and death.

To create such good *samskaras*, let noble thoughts course through the mind. Let the hands be busy doing deeds of goodness. Thoughts of God within, and the performance of *svadharma* without, the hands performing the *karma* of service and in the mind, *vikarma*, the special action of the mind—these should go on constantly. Look at Gandhiji. He spins on the charkha every day. He insists on our doing so too. But why spin every day ? Is it not enough if we spin now and then for the cloth we need ? But then, this would only be a worldly or secular activity. Spinning daily is spiritual ; it indicates an inner desire to do what we can for our country. The thread we spin binds us day by day with *Daridranarayan* (God in the form of the poor). It strengthens the good association, the *samskara*.

The doctor prescribes a medicine to be taken daily by us. But what if we drank it up all at once ? It would be too much of a good thing ; anyhow, the purpose will not be fulfilled. By the continuous good effect of a course of medicine, the faults in nature should be set right. The same holds good of life. We perform *abhisheka* (ceremonial bathing) of Siva in a thin continuous stream. I am fond of this example. I used to see this every day when I was a child. If you collect all the water used in twenty-four hours, you might perhaps get two buckets. Why not pour the two bucketfuls all at once on Siva's head ? I got the answer to this even as a child. If we overturn the bucket in one breath, the *karma* would not bear fruit. The flow of the water drop by drop is worship. The flow of our *samskaras* should be even and perpetual, like this water of worship. In the morning, at noon and again in the evening, by day and by night, the same yesterday,

today and tomorrow, the same this year and the next, so too in *janma* after *janma* (birth after birth), the same in life as in death, the divine stream of *samskara*, made up of little drops of action, should flow uninterruptedly, all through one's life. It is only when this stream flows unbroken, that we can reach our goal and plant there the flag of victory. And this stream of *samskara* should flow steadily in the same direction. Otherwise it would be like water falling on a rock, and scattered in many directions, without ever forming a river. On the contrary, if all the water runs in one direction, it becomes a stream and, gathering force as it goes down the mountains, it becomes a mighty river like the Ganga, and mixes with the sea. The stream that runs in one direction reaches the sea, but the water that is scattered in many directions soon dries up. The same is true of *samskaras*. If they come and go, of what use are they ? It is only when the pure stream of *samskaras* flows unbroken through life that the death that comes at its end will appear as a bringer of bliss. The traveller who does not tarry by the way, escapes the delusions and temptations that beset him, and walks with firm steps up the steep ascent, and reaches the mountain-top, and there throws down the burden on his back, and enjoys the free air that blows there—who but he can experience such joy ? But the sun will not stay for the traveller that dallies by the way.

(39) War day and night

All this means that when the outward performance of *svadharma* and the purificatory interior action of remembering God go on together, when the stream of *karma* without and *vikarma* within flows continuously, death will be a bringer of joy. That is why the Lord says,

" Remember me at all times and fight."

"*Tasmaat sarveshu kaaleshu maamanusmara yuddhya cha.*"

" Steep yourself in Him always." Be forever absorbed in Him. When love for the Lord pervades you within and

without, and fills the whole of your life, only then will you find a constant joy in holy things. Then evil tendencies will not appear before you. Beautiful and noble desires sprout in the heart ; good deeds come naturally.

It is true that, when one always remembers the Lord, good deeds come naturally to one ; but the Lord also commands, " Be fighting all the time."

Tukaram says,

> " Night and day, within and without, in the heart and in the world, we are at war."

Within and without us spreads a boundless creation. With all these created things, the mind is at war without a pause. We cannot say that, in this war, victory will be ours in every battle. He who wins in the end is the true conqueror. It is the final decision that prevails. If on many occasions one earns honour, on many others one earns dishonour. Disgrace or defeat is no cause for depondency. If after nineteen strokes the stone does not break, but it does at the twentieth stroke, have the first nineteen been wasted ? Did they not make possible the success of the twentieth ?

To lose hope is to become an atheist. Have the faith that the Lord is our protector. To develop self-confidence in the child, the mother allows it freedom to wander ; but she would not let it fall. When she sees it about to fall, she rushes to its help. The Lord keeps watch over you. He holds in His hand the string of your life's kite. Sometimes He pulls the string taut, at others leaves it loose; but be sure the string is ever in his hand. At the ghats of the Ganga, they teach swimming ; a rope is tied to a tree on the bank and the other end to the waist of the learner, before he is thrown into the water. But the teacher stands in the water ready to pull him up. The novice sinks and rises up a few times, but in the end masters the art of swimming. In the same way, the Lord teaches us the art of living.

(40) The bright and the dark paths

Therefore, if, with faith in the Lord, you fight day and night, in thought, word and deed, the last moment will be wonderfully perfect. Then all the divine powers will favour you. It is this lesson that is taught through images at the end of this Chapter. Understand this image. If, at the time of one's death, fire burns, the sun shines, the moon waxes and the sun moves northward through the beautiful cloudless heavens, such a one merges in *brahman*. But if smoke piles up, and it darkens within and the moon wanes and the sun moves southward through the dark cloudy sky, such a one gets caught again in the vortex of birth and death.

Many people read this and get bewildered. If you want a holy death, you should seek the grace of fire, the sun, the moon and the sky. Fire is the symbol of *karma* and *yajna*, of work and sacrifice. Even at the end, the flames of *yajna* should keep burning. Justice Ranade used to say, " He is lucky who dies in the unremitting performance of duty. I shall be happy if I die while reading, writing, or working." This is what is meant by saying that " fire is burning." If one is to keep working even at the moment of death, one must have the grace of fire (*agni*). That the intellect shines bright and undimmed until the last moment, is by the sun's grace. By the grace of the moon pure *bhavanas* (thoughts and feelings) wax and increase in the mind at the time of death. The moon is the god of the mind, of *bhavana*. Like the moon of the bright fortnight, so devotion, love, energy, benevolence, compassion and such pure *bhavanas* should wax and grow perfect in the mind. The grace of the sky means that the firmament of the mind is clear of the clouds of desire. Once Gandhiji said, " I keep shouting of the charkha day and night. I consider the charkha a holy thing. And yet, at the last moment, even this concern, this *vasana*, should disappear. He who inspired me with this love of the charkha

can very well look after it Himself. The charkha has now been taken up by many good people. I must now give up worrying about the charkha and get ready to join the Lord." The northward journey means that the heart should be free of the clouds of attachment.

When the hands perform acts of service till the last breath, the full moon of *bhavana* shines brightly, the mind's sky is free from desire, and the intellect is bright and keen—when a man dies in this state, we may take it that he has merged in the Lord. In order to make such an auspicious ending, one must watch day and night and wage skilful war. Not even for an instant should an evil tendency be permitted in the mind. And in order to gain the strength necessary for this, one should pray constantly to the Lord. Again and again, one should remember His name and meditate on His truth.

CHAPTER IX

THE KINGLY ART OF SERVICE TO HUMANITY—THE YOGA OF DEDICATION

(41) Knowledge through direct experience

These talks of mine are not meant to teach others. No doubt those who want to profit from them may surely do so. For my part, when I talk on the *Gita*, I regard it as *Ram-nam.* As I go on speaking, it is to me the same experience as uttering the Names of God.

Between what I have been saying now and the Ninth Chapter there is a close connection. In this Chapter is described the rare power of the name of God. This Chapter is placed at the centre of the *Gita*, as the *Gita* itself is at the centre of the *Mahabharata*. For many reasons, this Chapter has been considered holy. It is said Jnanadev, in his final *samadhi*, recited this Chapter and breathed his last. At the very thought of this Chapter, tears come to my eyes, and my heart is full. How great is the gift that Vyasadeva has given to us ! This is his gift not to India alone, but to all mankind. What the Lord taught to Arjuna could not be expressed in words. But Vyasa, moved by compassion, put it into Sanskrit speech ; he clothed in words the ineffable secret. At the beginning of this Chapter, the Lord says,

> " *Raajavidyaa raajaguhyam pavitram idam uttamam.*"
>
> " This is the supreme knowledge, the supreme secret, the highest and the purest."

And this unique knowledge is something to be experienced directly. The Lord says it is " *pratyakshaavagama*," knowledge to be realised by oneself—a knowledge which is beyond words, but which has been tested on the touchstone of direct experience. That is why it is so sweet, Tulasidas has said :—

> " Who knows who will go to Yama's abode, and who to the higher world the home of the gods ?

To Tulsi it seems best to live on this earth as
Rama's slave."

It is the sweetness of living in the service of Rama that is found in this Chapter. What can be experienced in this body, seen directly with these eyes, enjoyed here and now in this life, is described here. When we eat sugar, its sweetness is directly experienced. The sweetness of living as Rama's servant is experienced in the same direct manner here. The supreme knowledge which reveals to us the sweetness in this mortal life is the subject of this Chapter. Though this knowledge is a hidden secret, the Lord opens it out for all to understand with ease.

(42) The easy way

The *Gita* is the essence of the Vedic *dharma*, that is, the way of life derived from the *Vedas*. The *Vedas* are considered to be older than all the other Scriptures in the world. That is why enthusiasts call them "*anadi*," uncreated. Thus the *Vedas* are accorded special reverence. Even if we approach them from the historical point of view, they are the most ancient expression of the earliest experiences of our race. These literary records are more valuable than copper-plates, stone inscriptions, coins, vessels and the remains of animals. The earliest historical evidence in the world is provided by the *Vedas*. The *dharma* which was but a seed in the *Vedas* grew and became a tree and yielded at last the sweet fruit of the *Gita*. What else but the fruit of the tree can we eat? It is only when the tree yields fruit that we get something to eat. The *Gita* is the twice-distilled essence of the Vedic *dharma*.

In this Vedic *dharma*, which had grown from the most ancient times, are mentioned various *yagas* and *yajnas*, rites and rituals, many penances and practices. This Chapter of Observance is not useless, but it requires a fitness in the doer. To acquire this was not easy for every one. Who is to climb up the tall coconut tree, pluck the fruit, remove the fibre,

break it and get at the kernel ? However hungry I may be, what use is the fruit up there in the tree to me ? I look up at the coconut and the coconut looks down at me. How can it quench the fire of my hunger, until it reaches my hands ? These various rites were filled with subtle ideas. How could the common folk comprehend them ? There is no *moksha* except through the Vedic path ; but few had the fitness to study the Vedas. What happens to the others, then ? Hence the saints, filled with compassion, came forward saying, " Come, we shall take out the essence of the Vedas. We shall give it to the world in a simple form." Tukaram sings,

" Infinite are the Vedas ; but this is their substance."

What is that substance ? The Name of the Lord. The Name of the Lord is the essence of the *Vedas*. It is certain that through *Ramanama* one can attain *moksha*, which means that *moksha* has become easy for women, children, *sudras*, *vaisyas*, the rustic and the poor, the weak, the sick and the lame, indeed for everyone. The *moksha* that lay locked up in the Vedas as in a strong box, the Lord has brought out and placed at the cross-roads. What a direct and easy way to *moksha* ! One's ordinary life, what one does as *svadharma*, one's acts of service, why not make this itself a *yajna*, a sacrifice? Where is the need for any other sacrifice, any *yagas* or *yajnas* ? Regard as a *yajna*, and continue to perform, the ordinary work of service that you do every day. This is the royal road,

" *yam aasthaaya naro raajan na pramaadyeta karhichit*
dhaavan nimiilya vaa netre na skhalet na patet iha."

" On which, even if you run with closed eyes, there is
no danger of stumbling or falling."

The other path is like a razor's edge, sharp and difficult to traverse—" *kshurasya dhaaraa nisitaa duratyayaa* ;" the Vedic way is sharper and more perilous than the edge of a sword. How much easier is the way of service to Rama. The engineer

makes the gradient so gentle that we reach the top almost unaware that we are climbing. This is the merit of the royal road too. Where the man stands and works, through that ordinary task, he is able to reach the Supreme—such is this method.

Does the Lord hide Himself somewhere, in some cave or crevice, in some river or in some heaven ? Diamonds and rubies, gold and silver, lie hidden in the bowels of the earth, pearls and corals in the depths of the sea. But is this gem, the Lord, hidden somewhere ? Have we to dig Him up ? Why, He stands all the time before all of us. Everyone here is a manifestation of the Lord. The Lord says, "Do not dishonour the person of the Lord manifest in human form, my brother." It is the Lord that appears as all things moving and unmoving. Where is the need for artificial aids to seek and find Him ? The way is straight and easy. Relate to the Lord whatever service you perform ; that is enough. Become Rama's servant. No doubt those arduous Vedic processes, the *yajna*, the *svaha*, the *svadha*, the *sraddha*, the *tarpana* (Vedic rituals), will take us towards *moksha*. But they raise the problem of the fit and the unfit. We need none of it. Do just this much. Whatever you do, dedicate to the Lord. Relate to Him every act of yours. This is what the Ninth Chapter teaches. Hence it is most dear to *bhaktas*.

(43) No question of fitness

The most charming part of Krishna's life is his childhood. It is Bala-Krishna, the young Krishna, that we cherish in our hearts and worship. He goes out with other cowherd boys grazing cattle ; he eats and laughs and plays with them. When they set out to worship Indra, he told them, "Who has seen Indra ? How has he helped us ? But this Govardhan hill stands here before our eyes. Our cattle graze on its slopes. Streams flow from it. Let us therefore worship it." Such things he taught them. To his cowherd companions,

to the *gopis* with whom he laughed and talked, to the cows and calves he rejoiced in, to them all he opened the door of *moksha*. The Supreme Lord Krishna has shown us in experience this easy way. He moved with cows and calves in his childhood, with horses when he grew up. On hearing the music of his flute the cows went into ecstasy ; the horses thrilled to the touch of his hand as he stroked them. The cows and calves, the chariot-horses, were filled with Krishna, became one with Him. Even those creatures, supposed to be born in sin, attained *moksha*. Sri Krishna made it clear that not only men but animals and birds had the right to *moksha*. He proved it in practice in His life.

Krishna's experience was Vyasa's too. Krishna and Vyasa are one. The essence of their lives is the same. *Moksha* does not depend upon one's learning or performance of rites. All it needs is straight and simple *bhakti*. While learned men who say " I, I," are left behind, innocent and devout women go forward. When the mind is pure and the heart full of simplicity and holiness, *moksha* is not difficult to attain. There is a Chapter in the *Mahabharata* describing the conversation between Janaka and Sulabha. Vyasa creates a situation where Janaka approaches a woman to learn wisdom from her. You may go on discussing whether women have the right to study the Vedas ; but here we see before our eyes Sulabha teaching divine wisdom to King Janaka. She is an ordinary woman, and he an emperor and a profound scholar. But the wise Janaka had not attained *moksha*. And so Vyasa sends him to fall at the feet of Sulabha. The story of the *vaisya* (merchant) Tuladhar is similar. The brahmin Jajali goes to him in search of wisdom. Tuladhar tells him, " All my wisdom consists in holding the scales even." Similar too is the story of the hunter. He killed animals and sold meat. That was how he served society. An arrogant brahmin ascetic was asked by his guru to approach the hunter and

learn wisdom from him. The brahmin wondered, "What can this butcher teach me ?" Still he went to him and saw him cutting the meat, washing it and displaying it for sale. He said to the brahmin, "Look, I am doing this work as well as I can, making it a form of *dharma.* I pour all my soul into this work, and serve my parents." In the form of this hunter Vyasadeva puts before us an ideal man.

The purpose of introducing into the *Mahabharata* these stories about a woman, a *vaisva* and a *sudra* is to make it clear that the doors of *moksha* are open to all. It is this truth that is taught in the Ninth Chapter. It sets the seal of approval on these stories. The joy of living in Rama's service was found in the hunter's life. Tukaram was a lover of *ahimsa* but he describes with gusto the story of Sajan the butcher who found *moksha* by being a butcher. Tukaram asks elsewhere, "Lord, what salvation is there for those who kill animals ?" But he writes, "With the butcher Sajan He sells meat," and thus says that the Lord was a friend and helper of the butcher. The Lord who rolls paper for Narsi Mehta, who carries water for the water-carrier Ekanath, who helps the cobbler Damaji in his shoe-making, who helps Janabai, beloved of the Maharashtrians, in pounding and grinding grain, that same Lord also helps the butcher Sajan with the same love, says Tukaram. The moral is that we should surrender all our actions to the Lord. If the action is filled with pure *bhavana*, with the attitude of service, it becomes a *yajna*.

(44) Dedicate to the Lord the fruit of action

It is this important truth which is described in the Ninth Chapter, where *karma-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* are beautifully blended. *Karma-yoga* means doing the action, but renouncing the fruit. Act with such skill that the fragrance of the fruit, the desire for reward, does not touch the mind. It is like planting a walnut tree. The walnut tree takes twenty-five

years to yield fruit. The man who plants it rarely gets the chance of eating in his own lifetime the fruit of the tree he planted. And yet he has to plant and water and look after the tree lovingly. *Karma-yoga* means planting and minding the tree but not desiring the fruit. What is *bhakti-yoga* ? It means becoming one with the Lord through devotion. In *raja-yoga*, both *karma* and *bhakti* are combined. *Raja-yoga* has been explained by different people in different ways. But I should describe it briefly as a beautiful combination of *karma-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga*.

Let us perform action, and not throw away the fruit but dedicate it to God. To throw away the fruit would be to reject it, but dedication is different. What a lovely arrangement ! There is a wonderful sweetness in it. Renouncing the fruit does not mean that no one would get the benefit of it. It will reach someone or the other, someone or the other will surely receive it. Then the question may arise whether he who gets the benefit deserves it. If a beggar comes to our door, we say, " You are strong and sturdy. Why should you beg ? Get away." We consider whether it is right or wrong for him to beg. The poor fellow is ashamed and goes away. There is no trace of fellow-feeling in our heart. Further, how are we to determine the deserts of the man who begs ? Once, in my childhood, I expressed such a doubt to my mother, and the answer she gave me then is still ringing in my ears. I told her, " This beggar is hale and healthy. If we give him alms, we should be only encouraging laziness and bad habits." And I went on to quote the words from the Gita, " *dese kaale cha paatre cha*," (in the right place, at the right time, to the deserving person). She answered, " He who has come to beg is none else than the Lord. Now you may decide whether he is fit to receive your alms. Or would you say that the Lord is not fit ? What right have you and I to judge of fitness ? I see no need for all this question-

ing. To me he is the Lord." And to this day I do not know any argument that will meet this answer.

I consider fitness when it is a question of feeding another, but when it comes to filling my own stomach, the thought of fitness doesn't occur to me. The man who comes to our door for food, why should we look on him as just a beggar ? Why should I not see that, when I give something to someone, I am giving it to God. *Raja-yoga* says, " The benefit of your *karma* goes to someone, doesn't it ? If so, give it over to the Lord, dedicate it to Him." *Raja-yoga* points out the proper recipient. There is no negative action of renouncing the fruit in *raja-yoga,* and since everything is dedicated to the Lord, the question of fitness or unfitness is eliminated. The gift that is offered to the Lord is always pure. Even if there are impurities in your action, it will become pure when it reaches His hands. However hard we try to make our actions perfect, there will still be some shortcomings. Nevertheless, let us act with the utmost possible purity. The intellect is God's gift. It is our duty to use it in as pure a form as possible. It would be a sin not to do so. So we should think of fitness and unfitness ; but the decision becomes easy when you are devoted to the Lord.

For attaining purity of mind, we should give away the fruit. Dedicate to the Lord every action as it takes shape. As actions take shape before our eyes, dedicate them then and there to the Lord and be content. We do not give up the fruit, we only give it over to the Lord. Why only the fruit, even the *vasanas,* the tendencies that arise in the mind, and the deformations like lust and anger—place them all at the feet of the Lord, and be free from care.

" My lust and my anger, I surrender to Vitthal."

Here there is no need to torture oneself in the fire of self-control. Surrender promptly and find freedom. No holding down or cutting off.

"If the sickness can be cured by milk and sugar, why drink the bitter juice of *neem*?" The senses also are means for our use. Dedicate them to the Lord. People complain that the ears do not listen to such good advice. Are we then to close our ears? No, we should keep them open, but only to stories of Hari. It is difficult to keep the ears from hearing. But it is very easy, it is pleasant and profitable, to make them listen to stories of Hari. Give your ears to Rama. Use your mouth to utter Rama's name. The senses are not enemies. They are our friends. Their power for good is boundless. Therefore, the best and noblest way to use every one of the senses is with the intellect surrendered to the Lord. This is called *raja-yoga*.

(45) No need for special activity

It is not as if we should dedicate to the Lord only particular kinds of action. We should dedicate to him all our action as such. With what love Rama accepted the fruit offered by Sabari! One need not go and sit in a cave to worship God. Whatever action you perform, wherever you may perform it, surrender it to God. The mother waiting on her child waits on God. When she bathes her child, she is performing *Rudra-abhisheka* for God. The mother, regarding the child as a gift from God, should tend it with devotion. How tenderly did Kausalya care for Rama and Yasoda for Krishna. Suka, Valmiki and Tulsidas consider themselves lucky in describing this tenderness and do it with unbounded enthusiasm. The mother's act of tender care is indeed noble. What greater fortune could come to her than serving the image of the Lord, her child? When we serve each other, if only we did it with this attitude, how would our actions be transformed! We should have the *bhavana* that whatever work comes to us, it is the service of the Lord Himself.

The farmer serves his bullock. Is the bullock to be despised? No, the bull that Vamadeva in the *Vedas* describes as pervading

the universe in the form of *sakti* (energy), is present in the farmer's bullock too.

" *chatvaari srngaa trayo asya paadaa*
dve siirshe sapta hastaaso asya
tridhaa baddho vrshabho roraviiti
maho devo martyaan aavivesa."

" The bull which has four horns, three legs, two heads and seven hands is bound in three places and, becoming mighty in splendour, pervades all mortal things. It is this same bull that roars and fills the universe which the farmer worships." The commentators have interpreted this passage in a variety of ways. And this bullock too is wonderful ! The bull that roars in the heavens and pours down the rains is present in the farmer's bullock which drops down dung and urine to fertilise the field. If a farmer serves his cattle with this noble *bhavana*, even this ordinary work of his becomes worship of the Lord.

In the same way, the mistress of the household tries to feed and please the family by keeping the kitchen clean, lighting the fire and preparing pure and wholesome food, and all these acts of hers are *yajna*, sacrificial action. Is this a mere oven, is it not a sacrificial fire kindled by the mother ? How pure and holy the food will be when it is cooked with the *bhavana* of pleasing the Lord—just think of it. If the *grhalakshmi* (" the goddess of the household ") is inspired by such noble thoughts and feelings, we should think of her as belonging to the race of the *rishipatnis* (the wives of the *rishis*) described in the *Bhagavata.* While ever so many mothers have attained *moksha* through service, scholars and learned men who are thinking of themselves all the time are cast in corners uncared for.

(46) All life can be filled with God

The moments of our daily life may appear commonplace, but in reality they are not so, they carry enormous significance.

All one's life is a great *yajna-karma*, a continual sacrificial performance. What is sleep ? It is a kind of *samadhi*, an experience of oneness. If we surrender all our enjoyments to the Lord before we fall asleep, what is sleep but *samadhi* ? There is a custom among us of reciting the *Purushasukta* while taking a bath. Now what is the connection between the *Purushasukta* and a bath ? You will surely see it if you try. What is the connection between the *virat purusha*, the Cosmic Person, with his thousand hands and thousand eyes, and this my bath ? The connection is that, in the pitcher of water that you pour down on your head, there are thousands of drops. Those drops wash your head—they rid you of your sins. It is like the blessing of the Lord showered on your head. The thousand hands of the Lord are pouring a thousand streams on your head. Through these drops the Lord Himself is purifying your mind and heart. If you pour this divine *bhavana* into this act, the bath will assume a new quality and acquire a boundless power.

Any action performed with this *bhavana*, that is, a feeling that it is God's work, becomes a sacrament ; this has been tested by experience. Assume for a while that the visitor to your house is the Lord Himself. When, in the ordinary course, a distinguished guest is expected in our house, how we clean and polish and what a grand feast do we prepare ! But if we think that the Lord Himself is the guest, would it not make a vast difference to our feelings ? Kabir was busy at his loom ; he was absorbed in his work and sang :

"*jhiini jhiini jhiini jhiini biini chadariya.*"

He forgot himself as if he were weaving a *chaddar* for the Lord. The *rishi* of the *Rgveda* says :—

vastreva bhadraa sukrtaa supaanii.

I offer this my hymn like a garment woven well by lovely hands to the Lord. The poet makes his songs for the Lord's sake. And he who spins and weaves cloth, he too does it

for the Lord's sake. Here is a thought to touch the heart, to purify and exhilarate. Once this *bhavana* comes into our life, how flawless would our days become ! When the light flashes in darkness, does not the darkness disappear instantaneously ? Is it destroyed gradually ? No, in one instant the whole thing within and without is transformed. In the same way, the moment we relate every action to the Lord, at once, a wonderful new energy flows into our life. Every action becomes pure. We are filled with enthusiasm. Where is the zest in our life today ? We are alive only because we are not yet dead. There is a dearth of enthusiasm all round. Life is dark, ugly and full of sorrow. But, just for a while, let the mind consider that all our actions are for the sake of the Lord. Then we will realise how full of beauty and value our lives become.

There is no doubt that one name of God transforms life at once. Don't say what good can the word " Rama " do. Just try saying it and see what happens. In the evening, after his day's work, the farmer returns home. On the way he meets a traveller, and says to him—

" The night is falling, Narayana ; come home with me."

As the farmer says, " Brother traveller, Oh Narayana, stop for a while. It is night, Lord, come to my house," his word changes the traveller, does it not? Even if he is a dacoit or a robber, he is transformed into a friend. This conversion is due to the *bhavana* ; such is the power of *bhavana* to transform all things. *Bhavana* is the substance of life. A strange lad of twenty comes to the house. The father gives him his daughter. The old man touches the feet of the youngster—what does this mean ? How holy is this act of giving away a daughter ! He who accepts the gift is regarded as God himself. This *bhavana* which we take to a son-in-law, let us carry it further and higher.

Some may object, "What do we gain by making these false suppositions ?" But I would say : "Don't start with such talk of truth and falsehood. Practise it first, and gain experience of it ; then you will know what is true and what is false. If at the marriage ceremony you do not merely say in words, but feel at heart, that the bridegroom is the Lord Himself, you will realise what a great difference this makes. As a result of this holy *bhavana*, the object will change so much that its later form will differ from its earlier as heaven from earth. The undeserving becomes deserving, and the evil good. Was it not in this way that Balya (Valmiki) the hunter was converted ? There in the forest, the sage Narada's fingers dance on the strings of the *vina*, he sings the name of Narayana ; the robber Balya runs towards him to kill him. Even then, his calm undisturbed, the sage looks on him with eyes full of love. Never till now had Balya seen such a thing. He had seen only two kinds of animal—one which fled from his bow and arrow and another which turned round on him and attacked him. But Narada neither fled nor flared up at sight of him, but stood there at peace. Balya's bow and arrow stood still. Narada would neither raise his brow nor shut his eyes. The music went on sweetly as before. He asked the robber, "Why does your arrow stop ?" Balya answered, "At the sight of your peace." Narada had transformed Balya. Was the change true or false ?

Who is to decide that a man is bad ? Even if a really bad person appears before you, think that he is the Lord Himself. Even the villain will become a saint. Then, are we to imagine such falsehood ? But I say, who can be certain that the man is wicked ? Some say, "Good people, being good themselves, see nothing but goodness around them. But in fact, this is not true." Should the world then accept as true only what you see, and nothing else ? Are we then to suppose that

it is only the bad people who have the means to take the full measure of creation? Why not say that there is nothing wrong with creation, but it appears bad to you because of badness in you ? Look, creation is but a mirror. What you are and what you bring to this mirror, the image of this you see in the world. It is the eye of the beholder that determines the form of the world. Therefore, approach all creation with the feeling that it is good, that it is pure. Carry the same *bhavana* to all your ordinary actions. Then you will see a miraculous change. This is what the Lord means us to understand when He says :—

"*yatkaroshi yadasnaasi yajjuhoshi dadaasi yat*
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kurushva madarpanam."

"Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever rites or austerities you perform, whatever you give, do it, O son of Kunti, as an offering to me."

What you do, such as it is, dedicate it all to the Lord.

When I was a child, my mother used to tell me a story. It is a funny little story, but it contains a profound secret. There was a girl who was resolved that everything she did should go to Krishna. After cleaning the oven in the kitchen with a mixture of clay and cowdung, she made what was left into a ball and threw it out, saying, "*Krishnaarpanamastu,*" "May Krishna accept it." What happened was that the ball of cowdung used to rise into the air and, flying into the temple, stick on the face of the image of the Lord. The priest, poor fellow, got tired cleaning up the image. He did not know what to do. At last he discovered that this was all due to the girl. As long as the girl was alive, the image could not be kept clean. One day the girl fell sick. She was about to die. She dedicated her death also to Krishna. The image in the temple fell to pieces. The heavenly chariot came to fetch her—but this too she dedicated to Krishna. The chariot dashed against the temple

and was smashed up. Even heaven is reduced to nothing before the thought of Krishna.

The meaning of it all is that whatever actions we do, whether good or bad, a new dimension of power enters into them the moment we surrender them to the Lord. The grains of maize are reddish yellow in colour, but when maize is parched in sand, what good popcorn it becomes ! What a difference between the dainty popcorn, white and soft, and the hard grain! But there is no doubt that the one has become the other, and the change is due to the fire. Likewise, if you grind this hard grain in a mill, it becomes soft flour. As contact with fire makes it flowerlike, and grinding in the mill makes it into soft flour, so even the smallest actions are transformed when they are passed through the process of dedication to God. By this *bhavana*, this feeling, their value is raised. Do not despise the common *gudel* flower, the *bel* leaf, the tender *tulasi* leaf and the *dub* grass—

"Tuka says, by association with Vitthal, sweetness comes to it."

Associate everything with the Lord, and then taste it afresh. Where is the spice to equal Rama ? Add this divine *masala* to everything you do, so it will become beautiful and tasty.

During the evening worship at the temple, when the smoke of incense rises, lamps are lit, and the burning camphor is waved before the image, we feel indeed the presence of the Lord before our eyes. All day He was awake, and now it is time for Him to go to sleep. The devotees put Him to sleep with the lullaby—

"Sweetly sleep, my Gopala, my sweet one, sleep."

A sceptic asks, " Does your God sleep too ? "

My dear man, what does God not do ? If the Lord does not sleep and wake, can the stone then sleep and wake ? My friend, it is the Lord that sleeps and wakes, it is He

that eats and drinks. As the day dawns, Tulasidas wakes the Lord, sings and prays to the Lord.

> "Wake up, O Lord of the Raghus, my child, the birds are singing in the woods."

Tulasidas looks on all his brothers and sisters, all the men and women in the world, as Ramachandra Himself and says to them, "My Ramas, my kings, arise," What a beautiful idea! For a contrast, let us take a hostel where they wake up the boys, shouting, "Get up, you sleepy-heads." Is this rude shouting in harmony with the auspicious morning hour? Young Rama is asleep in Visvamitra's *asram*. And this is how, according to Valmiki, the teacher awakens the pupil,

> "*Raama iti madhuraam vaaniim visvaamitro abhyabhaashata*
> *uttishtha narasaarduula puurvaa sandhyaa pravartate.*"

Thus, in a sweet voice, Visvamitra says, "Rama, my child, the sky is brightening in the east; get up, O tiger among men." What a difference between the *asram* and the modern hostel! Why should the poor sleeping lad feel it is his foe through seven births that wakes him up? First whisper, then speak a little louder, but never be rough or rude. If he does not wake up, try again after ten minutes. If he does not get up in time today, be sure he will do so tomorrow. Sing to him songs of the sunrise, songs of praise. You may think that waking up a sleeper is an ordinary job, but we can fill even that with poetry, with feeling and beauty. We should wake him up as if he were God asleep. Yes, we should be gentle in rousing the image of God. Waking up a sleeper is also an art.

Inform all your actions with this idea. Indeed, this idea is essential to teaching. What are children but the images of God? The teacher should be filled with the *bhavana* that he is rendering service to these gods. If he did, he

would never bawl out at them, " Get out ! Stand up for an hour ! Hold out your hand ! How dirty your clothes are ! Go and clean your nose ! " He would, instead, gently wipe the child's nose, he would wash and mend his clothes. If the teacher does so, what a change there will be ! Whoever heard of any good coming out of beating and cruelty ? Students too should regard their teachers with the same divine *bhavana.* Teachers should look on their pupils as gods, and so too should the pupils regard their teachers. If this mutual *bhavana* is established, how brightly would knowledge shine ! Indeed, the boys are the Lord, and so is the teacher! If only the pupils feel, " This is not just a schoolmaster, this is the Lord Siva Himself. We are drinking in the nectar of His teaching, let us enlighten our understanding by service to Him," we can well imagine how they would behave towards him.

(47) No fear of sin

Once the *bhavana* settles in the mind that the Lord is a shining presence everywhere, the ethics of our mutual relations will spring of its own accord in the heart. There is no need to look for it in books. Then all defects will vanish, sin will flee, and the darkness of evil disappear.

Tukaram has said :—

" Be free and bold, take now the divine name of Vitthal,
He will come to you, and sin will cease to be."

Well, then, you are free to sin if you wish ! I shall see whether you get tired of sinning first, or *Ramanama* gets tired of destroying your sins. Which is the sin powerful enough to stand against the Lord's name ? " Sin as much as you like " ; a charter of freedom is given to you. Let the Lord's name and your sins fight it out. My dear man, the Name has the power to reduce to ashes in a moment all the sins not merely of the present life, but of countless *janmas.* No matter how ancient the darkness is in a cave,

it flees when a match is struck. The darkness becomes light. The older the sin, the more quickly it is destroyed, because it is old and must perish. It is old fuel that burns to ashes soon.

No sin can stand near *Ramanama*. Do not children say that ghosts vanish when you say " Rama " ? When I was young, we used to challenge each other to go to the burning ground at dead of night and drive in a peg there. There would be snakes and thorns on the way, and darkness all round, but nothing daunted me. No ghost ever appeared. Ghosts are creations of the mind, why then would we see them ? Where did the boy of ten gain the courage to visit the cremation ground ? From *Ramanama*. This is the glory of the Lord who is the image of truth. If you have the *bhavana* that the Lord is always by your side, then you, His servant, will know no fear even if the whole world turns upside down. Which demon can eat you up ? The demon may eat and digest the body, but not the truth. There is no power on earth that can destroy truth. Not for a moment can sin stand before the name of the Lord. Therefore turn your heart towards God. Attain His grace. Dedicate all actions to Him. Become altogether His. If you strengthen the *bhavana* that all actions should be offered up to the Lord, this sordid life will become divine, the commonplace will become beautiful.

(48) Little but sweet

" *Patram pushpam phalam toyam*," a leaf, a flower, a fruit, a little water, whatever it is, *bhakti* makes the offering complete. The question is not how much you give, but with what *bhavana*. Once I was talking to a professor about a problem in teaching. We happened to differ. Finally he said, " Sir, I've been at this job for eighteen years." When, instead of convincing me, he cited his long experience, I said in fun, " Sir, if for eighteen years a bullock is yoked

to an oil mill, does it become an engineer ?" It is one thing to go round and round blindly like a bullock and quite another to understand the science of engineering. A man may carry for years the burden of teaching and yet not understand the art of teaching. The knowledge that a scientist can acquire in six months, a porter cannot in eighteen years. The professor might have grown grey teaching, but that proves nothing. So also, there is no value in the quantity of the stuff you pile up before the Lord. There, the question is not about size or shape or price, but only about the *bhavana* ; not what or how much we offer, but how, in what spirit, we offer it. There are only 700 *slokas* in the *Gita :* there are other works with as many as 10,000. But we cannot say that because a thing is big, it is therefore better. What we should look for is the power, the energy it has. The number of actions in life is not important. Even a single action performed in a spirit of dedication to the Lord will bring us the fullness of experience. Sometimes in one holy moment an experience comes to us which in the ordinary course we cannot acquire in a stretch of years.

The essence of the matter is that, if we give over to the Lord all our actions, then life acquires strength and skill from this, and *moksha* is within our grasp. To perform action, without renouncing the fruit, to surrender it to the Lord, this is *raja-yoga.* This takes us a step beyond *karma-yoga*. *Karma-yoga* says, " Perform action. Renounce the fruit ; do not desire it." And there it stops. *Raja-yoga* says, " Do not give up the fruit, but surrender all your actions to the Lord. They are flowers ; they are means to carry you heavenward ; offer them to the image of the Lord. With action on one side and devotion on the other, combining both *karma* and *bhakti*, make your life more and more beautiful. Do not renounce the fruits. They are not to be thrown away, but dedicated to the Lord." The fruit that

is cut off from action in *karma-yoga*, is re-united with it in *raja-yoga*. When you sow the seed, you do not throw it away. What you sow, be it ever so little, will increase and yield infinite fruit. What you throw away is wholly lost. The action dedicated to the Lord is like a seed sown. It fills our life with endless joy and holiness.

CHAPTER X

CONTEMPLATION OF THE DIVINE GLORY

(49) The first half of the Gita : a retrospect

Friends, we have completed the first half of the *Gita*. Before we proceed to the second, it is good to look back. In the First Chapter it was made clear that the *Gita* aims at destroying delusion and making us pursue *svadharma*. We saw in the Second Chapter the basic principles of life, the way of action and the image of the *sthitaprajna* (the steadfast seer). *Karma*, *vikarma* and *akarma* were described in the Third, Fourth and Fifth Chapters. *Karma* means the performance of *svadharma* ; *vikarma* means the inward action which is performed to support the outward action performed as *svadharma*. When *karma* and *vikarma* become one, the mind and heart are purified and cleansed, the cravings we have acquired weaken, passions are stilled, feelings of difference vanish and then the state of *akarma* is reached. This state of *akarma*, it has been said, is of two kinds. In one, you feel, though you work day and night, that you are not working at all ; in the other, though you work not at all, you work unceasingly. Though these two kinds appear different, they are in their perfection one. Though the names *karma-yoga* and *sannyasa* are different, the truth at the heart of both is the same. The state of *akarma* is the final stage, the ultimate goal. This state is called "*moksha*." Thus in the first five chapters the philosophy of life has been fully set out.

After this, from the Sixth Chapter onwards, are described the more important methods of *vikarma* useful for cleansing the mind from within and attaining the ideal state of *akarma*. The Sixth Chapter describes the means to one-pointedness, —meditation, and as aids to meditation, practice (*abhyasa*) and detachment (*vairagya*). The Seventh Chapter teaches

us the noble and comprehensive means of devotion (*bhakti*). Go to the Lord with love ; go in search of knowledge ; go seeking the good of the world ; go for your personal need—go for whatever reason, only reach His presence once. give this Chapter the title of *prapatti-yoga*, the *yoga* that impels you to surrender to the Lord. This surrender has to be constantly practised ; the *yoga* of Constancy (*satatya-yoga*) is found in the Eighth Chapter. You will not find these names in the books, but they have been useful to me. *Satatya-yoga* means continuing one's *sadhana* to the end of one's life. The road that we have set out on, we should tread without stopping till we reach the end. There is no hope of ever reaching the goal if we walk how and when we like. We should never grow disgusted or despondent and complain, " How long are we to go on doing this *sadhana* ? " Till we attain the fruit, the *sadhana* should continue without pause.

Having introduced us to *satatya-yoga*, the *yoga* of Constancy, the Lord, in the Ninth Chapter, teaches us a truth commonplace in itself, but capable of transforming the whole quality of life—and this is *raja-yoga*. The Ninth Chapter tells us to dedicate to Krishna all that we do from moment to moment. In this one truth is concentrated all arts and skills, all *karma* and *vikarma*. All practices, all methods of action lie hidden in the *yoga* of dedication. This practice of dedication is *raja-yoga ;* all practices find fulfilment here. This comprehensive and all-powerful *sadhana* of dedication may seem easy and commonplace, but it is in reality hard. This *sadhana* is easy because anyone, from a rustic to a scholar, can perform it without much effort each in his own house and station. But easy though it is, it requires extraordinary merit to pursue it.

" Through much practice in virtue
I have come to love Vitthal."

It is only when the merits of many births accumulate that our hearts are drawn towards God. The most trivial things bring tears to our eyes, but not the name of God. What is to be done ? In one sense, as the saints say, this *sadhana* is easy. But in another sense, it is also difficult, and it has become all the more difficult in modern times.

Today, the film of materialism obscures our wisdom. Instead of beginning with an invocation to Ganesa, we begin with the question, "Does God exist anywhere ?" And no one of course sees Him anywhere. Life is full of passion and greed, full of distortions. The best of our philosophers today cannot rise beyond the thought of finding food for everybody. This is no fault of theirs, because as things are at present, many lack even food. Today's main problem is food. Our best brains are busy solving it. Sayanacharya, the commentator of the Vedas, says, "*bubhukshamaanah rudrarupena avatishthate*"—"hungry He appears in the form of Rudra."

Hungry people are *avatars* of Rudra. To appease their hunger, many philosophical and political theories have arisen. We cannot lift our head a moment from these problems. All our *bhagiratha-prayatna*, all our heroic efforts, today, are towards this end of enabling people to eat their food in peace and comfort. If in such a strange social order, even something as straight and easy as dedication to the Lord becomes very difficult, what is there to wonder at ? What then is one to do ? How to master the *yoga* of dedication to the Lord, how to make it easy—this is what we are going to see in the Tenth Chapter.

(50) An easy way to learn to see God

The methods we employ to teach children how to read, these same methods this Chapter employs to teach us to see God everywhere. We teach children the alphabet in two different ways. One method is to introduce the letters

by writing them big and, after they have learnt to recognise them, to reduce their size. It is the same 'A' and the same 'B'; only, the letters were big then and are small now. This is one method. The other method is to teach the easy letters first and the complicated ones later. In just these ways we should learn to see God. First, we should see His presence clearly in the big things. The Lord manifest in mighty natural objects like the sea and the mountain catches our eyes at once. Once we have learnt to recognise the Supreme in these vast manifestations, once we have seen these mighty forms of God, we shall recognise that every drop of water and every grain of sand is filled with the same God. There is no difference in meaning between the huge 'A' and the small 'A'—between the gross and the subtle. This is one way. In the second method we first recognise the supreme forms that are directly and easily seen, and then go on to more complicated forms. When the Lord is present in a natural way in a person, we recognise Him easily. For example, the divinity manifest in Rama easily impresses itself on our mind. Rama is an easy letter to learn; in Him, we see God clearly. But what about Ravana? This is not a simple letter but a combination; not pure gold but an alloy. Ravana's penance and merit are indeed great; but they are mixed with cruelty. First learn the simple letter, Rama. Compassionate, loving and lovable, Rama is an easy God to know and make our own. But to recognise the God who is in Ravana, it takes some time. First the simple, then the complicated letter. We should train ourselves first to see the Lord in good people, and later on in those not so good. The immense Being which we behold in the ocean is also present in the little drop of water. The Lord who is in Ramachandra is in Ravana too. What is found in the gross is present in the subtle; what is found in the simple is present in the complex. By these two methods we should learn to read the book of this world.

This vast creation is the Lord's Book. Because a thick veil covers our eyes it looks as though the book is closed. In this Book of Creation the Lord is written down everywhere in beautiful letters. But we do not understand it. There is a big obstacle to our seeing the Lord. That is, man does not recognise the Lord in the ordinary simple forms that are near him ; the distant dazzling forms are too overpowering. If you tell him, " See the Lord in your mother," he would say, " Is the Lord so simple and innocent ? " But if the Supreme Lord appears in all His splendour, can you endure the sight ? Kunti wished to see the distant sun face to face, near and direct ; but as he approached she could not bear the heat. If the Lord comes and stands before us in the fullness of His power, we cannot stand it ; if He comes in the gentle homely form of one's mother, He fails to command our respect. Rich sweets are indigestible ; plain milk is unpalatable. These are symptoms of misfortune and death. It is this sick mind that stands as an obstacle to our seeing the Lord. It is essential to get rid of this state of mind. First let us read the Lord that is near, concrete, easy ; and then go on to the subtle and the complicated forms.

(51) God in human form

The familiar form in which God first appears to us is our own mother. The Veda says, " *matr devo bhava.*" " Let your mother be your God." Who but the mother does the newborn child see ? The Lord Himself stands there as the embodiment of tenderness. It is this worship of the mother that we would carry to love of country when we sing " *vande mataram* " and then to love of the universal Mother Earth. And yet in the beginning the first image of the Lord Supreme that comes before the child is the mother. It is not impossible to attain *moksha* through the worship of the mother. What is worship of the mother but worship of the Lord as love incarnate—the mother is only the occasion and the symbol.

The Lord pours into her His love and tenderness and impels her from within. The poor woman does not understand whence this passion and attachment wells up in her heart. Does she cherish the child reckoning that he would be useful to her in her old age ? Not at all. She gave birth to the child. She went through agony. Those pains have made her mad for the child, have made him all the dearer to her. Without loving him she cannot live. How can she help loving him ? The mother is the embodiment of boundless service. Worshipping the mother is the noblest form of worship. Call God by the name of " Mother." What nobler name is there ? In the book of life, the big unfading letter that we read is " Mother." Learn to see God in her. Then see Him in the father, and in the teacher. The teacher gives us knowledge, he transforms us from animals into men. How great is his service ! First the mother, then the father, then the teacher and then the compassionate ones, the saints. First see the Lord in these concrete forms before us. If the Lord is not to be seen here, where else can He be seen ?

Mother, father, teacher, saint—see the Lord in them. If, in the same way, we learn to see the Lord in little children, how we should rejoice ! Dhruva, Prahlada, Nachiketa, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara—were they not all children ? But the authors of the Puranas, Vyasa and the rest, did not know where to place them, what to do with them. Sukadeva and Sankaracharya were free of desire even from childhood. And so too was Jnanadev. All of them were children ! But nowhere is the Lord manifest in such clear pure form as in these children. Lord Jesus loved children dearly. Once His disciples asked Him, " You speak so much about the Kingdom of God. Who can enter it ? " He lifted up a child standing by and set him on a table and said, " Of such is the Kingdom of God. To enter therein, one must become as a little child." What Jesus said is true. Swami Ramdas

was once playing with children. Some grown-up people who observed Samarth, the saint, romping with the children, were surprised. One of them asked, " What has come over you to-day ?" Samarth answered,

" Those who remained young became great,
Those who grew up became great rogues."

As one grows up one sprouts horns, one develops self-will. Then one never thinks of God ! The hearts of little children are unspoilt, their minds pure. We say to a child, " Don't tell lies." He asks, " What is a lie ?" Then we expound to him the doctrine that statement must correspond to fact. The boy is puzzled and begins to wonder whether there is another way of speaking than saying what is. How can one say what is not ? This is like telling one to call a square a square and not a circle. All this only surprises the child. What are children ? Images of purity, of God-head. Grown-ups teach them all wrong. The truth is : if we cannot see the Lord in mother, father, teacher, saint and child, in what other form can we see Him ? There is no nobler form of God than these. Learn first these gentle and familiar forms of the Lord. In these the Lord is written in bold, clear letters.

(52) God in Creation—some examples

First let us learn to see God in serene and holy human forms. In the same way let us see Him first in the sublime and beautiful aspects of nature. Look at the dawn, the divine glow that precedes sunrise. The *rishis* that sing the glories of this goddess dance with joy. Beautiful words spring from their hearts : " Oh Usha ! You are the divine messenger sent to us by the Lord. You are bathed in dew drops. You are the banner of immortality." The Vedic *rishi* says, " You bring us the message of the Lord. If, even after seeing you, I do not see and understand Him, who else can make Him

known to me ?" Clothed in such beauty, Usha rises and dances before us, but we have no eyes for her.

Again, look at the Sun. To see him is to see God. What vivid pictures he paints upon the sky ! For months the painter moves his brush up and down the canvas, trying to paint the sunrise with a splash of colours. But rise early in the morning and look at God's art. With what can we compare this art divine, this boundless beauty ? But who looks at this ? While out there the Lord stands in all his loveliness, here the fellow draws his blanket closer and snores. The sun says, " You lazy creature, you would sleep for ever, but I shan't let you, I shall wake you up." And he sends his living beams through the window—

" *suurya aatmaa jagatah tasthushah cha.*"

" The sun is the Self, the ground of all that moves and all that is still." The *rishi* calls him " *mitra* ", friend.

" *mitro janaan yaatayati bruvaano*
mitro daadhaara prthiviim uta dyaam."

" This friend calls out to the people and puts them to work. He upholds heaven and earth."

In truth the sun is the foundation of life. See the Lord in him.

And then the holy Ganga ! When I was living in Kasi I used to go and sit on the banks of the Ganga. I would go and sit there in the loneliness of night. What beauty, what brightness in its flow ! Those lovely and majestic waters and the countless stars of the sky in them ! I would sit there speechless. What calm of mind was mine when my eyes were filled with the sight of the Ganga, which descended from the matted locks of Siva, from the Himalayas, the river by whose banks Kings, casting off the bauble of power, perform their penance. In the stillness of the peace, I began to understand why the Hindu wishes that after death his bones at least should be thrown into the Ganga. You may laugh, but that does not alter the fact. To me this *bhavana*, this faith, appears worthy

of acceptance and indeed holy. During the last moments they pour a few drops of Ganga water into the mouth of the dying man. What are these drops, but the Lord Himself entering the body. Regard the Ganga as God ; it is His grace that flows as this water. Mother Ganga washes off and carries away in her course all the uncleanness of our mind and body. If God is not manifest to us in Mother Ganga, where else shall we see Him ? The sun, the rivers, the mighty ocean tossing up into tumultuous waves, all these are forms of God.

And the wind ! Whence it comes and where it goes, we do not know. It is the messenger of the Lord. In our India a great wind blows from the Himalayas and another from the mighty ocean. This purifying wind touches our heart. It awakens us. It whispers in our ears. But who listens to its message ? If the jailor does not give us a letter with four lines scribbled on it we feel sore. You poor wretch, what is there so precious in that letter ? The wind brings to you every moment the loving message of the Lord ; listen to it.

And the animals that serve us ! Mother Cow—how full of tenderness and attachment she is, how loving ! How eagerly cows come running back up hill and down dale to their calves after going grazing all day long. The Vedic *rishis*, seeing the gurgling rivers bringing pure water from the mountains, think of the heavy-uddered cows returning lowing to their calves. The *rishi* says to the river, " Oh Goddess, you who bring holy, sweet and clean water, you are like the cow bringing milk to her calf. As the cow will not stay in the forest, so you cannot stay in the mountains. You come running fast to meet your thirsty children."

" *vaasraa iva dhenavah syandamaanaah.*"

In the form of the loving cow, the Lord stands at our door.

And then the horse ! How beautiful, how true, how faithful! How dearly the Arabs love their horses? Don't you know the story of the Arab and his horse? He was driven by circumstances to sell his horse, and he made up his mind to do so. Carrying in his hand a purse full of gold coins, the price of the animal, he enters the stable. The moment he sees the noble and loving eyes of the horse, he flings the purse down exclaiming, " Even if I have to die, I will not sell my horse. Come what may. Let me perish of hunger if I must. God will help me." How his skin tingles when we pat him ! And what a lovely mane he has ! There is no end to his merits. What is there in a bicycle ? Look after a horse well and he will be ready to give up his life for you. He will be your friend and stay with you. A friend of mine was learning to ride. The horse used to throw him off. He said, " The horse will not let me keep my seat." I said to him, " Do you only attempt to ride the horse, or do you also feed him and look after him ? When someone else serves him, how can you ride him ? Feed him yourself and give him water, rub him down and then try to ride him." He did so and said to me after a few days, " The horse doesn't throw me off now." The horse is a form of the Lord. And would He throw off a servant ? The horse yielded to his devotion. The horse wants to know whether you are a devotee or not. The Lord Krishna would rub down the horse Himself, and feed him out of his yellow silk garment. If there is a puddle or a ditch to cross, the bicycle stops, but the horse jumps over. This beautiful and loving animal is a form of the Lord.

And the Lion ! When I was in Baroda I would get up in the morning listening to its majestic roar. The majestic beauty of his voice thrilled my heart. The magnificent sound proceeding from his heart was like the sound one hears in the inmost shrine of a temple. The noble courage, the fearless beauty of his expression ! The regal gait and mien !

His flowing mane is the *chamara*, the royal insignia, provided by nature for the King of the forest. In a garden in Baroda there was a lion. He was not free, he went round and round in a cage. But there was not a trace of cruelty in his eyes. There was compassion in his expression and his look. It looked as though he had no thought for the world and was absorbed in his own meditation. In fact, the lion is a holy manifestation of the Lord. I read, when I was a child, the story of "Androcles and the Lion." What a wonderful story ! The famished lion, remembering Androcles' kindness, becomes his friend and licks his feet. What does it mean? Androcles had seen in the lion the Lord Himself. There is always a lion near the Lord Siva. The lion is a creature of divine glory.

And is the tiger inferior ? The power of the Lord shines through him. It is not impossible to make friends with him. Bhagavan Panini, seated in the forest, was instructing his pupils. Just then a tiger came along. The boys got frightened and shouted "Tiger, Tiger !" Panini said calmly, "Well, what does "*vyaaghra*" (tiger) mean ? "*Vyaajighrati iti vyaaghrah.*" That is a *vyaaghra* whose sense of smell is acute. Though the boys were afraid of the animal, to Panini it was a harmless delightful word. Seeing the tiger, he began to explain the etymology of the word. The tiger ate Panini up. But what if it did ? The tiger liked the sweet smell of his body, and so tore it and ate it up. But Panini did not run away, because he was a worshipper of *sabda-brahman* (God as the Word). For him all things had become one. In the tiger too he recognised God as the Word. Because of this greatness, he is reverently called "Bhagavan Panini" in the commentaries when his name occurs. They express their deep gratitude to him for opening with the instrument of knowledge the eyes of the blind world—

> "*ajnaanaandhasya lokasya jnaanaanjanasalaakayaa*
> *chakshurunmiilitam yena tasmai paaninaye namah.*"

Thus Bhagavan Panini sees in the tiger the vision of the Lord. Jnanadev says—

> "Though to our home comes heaven, or upon us springs the tiger,
> Never let there be a break in the consciousness of Self."

Such was the state of Maharshi Panini. He had realised that the tiger was a divine manifestation.

So, too, with the serpent. People are much afraid of the snake. But the snake is, in its stern regard for cleanliness, like a brahmin. How clean! How beautiful! It cannot bear dirt. You may come across any number of dirty brahmins, but have you ever seen a dirty snake? It is like a *rishi* living in solitude. Pure, bright and lovely, it shines like a garland; why fear it? Our ancestors laid down ways of worshipping it. You may, if you like, say that Hinduism is full of all sorts of superstitions, but worship of the snake is an integral part of it. In my childhood I used to draw with turmeric the figure of a snake for my mother to worship. I would tell my mother, "But there are nice pictures for sale in the shop, mother." She would answer, "That's no good. We want none of that. Only the figure drawn by my child is good enough." And to it worship would be offered. Is this madness? But think a little. In the month of *sravan* (July–August), it comes to us as a guest. In the rainy season, the poor creature's house is filled with water. What could it do then? This *rishi*, who lives in some remote and lonely spot, comes and lies down under the gable or between the logs, wishing not to give us trouble. It takes up very little room. But we run after it with a stick. When at his need a guest comes to our house, is this the way to welcome him? It is said of Saint Francis that, when he saw a snake in the forest, he would welcome it lovingly, saying, "Come, brother, come!" And the snake would play in his lap and crawl up and down his body. Don't think this is fiction.

Love certainly has such power. We speak of the venom of the snake, but have men less of it ? The snake stings now and then ; and it is never the first to hurt. Nine out of ten snakes are not poisonous. They guard your fields. They live on the many kinds of vermin that destroy your crop. This helpful creature, so clean, so powerful, this lover of solitude, is an image of the Lord. Snakes are connected in one way or another with all our deities. Ganesa wears one round his waist. Siva wraps one round his neck. And Vishnu sleeps on one as his bed. Realise the secret, the charm of it. The meaning of it all is that the Lord's form is manifested through the snake. Recognise the Lord who dwells in the serpent.

(53) God in Creation—some more examples

How many such examples shall I give ? All I am doing is to use the imagination. The whole essence of the *Ramayana* lies in this beautiful power. The love of father and son, the love of mother and child, the love of brothers, the love of husband and wife—all this is found in the *Ramayana*. But it is not because of these things that the *Ramayana* is dear to me. It is dear to me because Rama made friends with the monkeys. People today say that these monkeys belonged to the Naga tribe. It is the job of the historians to research into the things of the past. I have nothing against their labours, but if Rama made friends with real monkeys, what is there impossible in that ? The *Ramatva*, the Rama-ness of Rama, his charm, lies precisely here ; that he made friends with monkeys.

Such too was the relation between Krishna and the cows. The ground of Krishna-worship is this imagination. Look at any picture of Krishna ; you will see him surrounded by cows. Gopalakrishna, Krishna the cowherd ! If we take the cows away from Krishna, what is left of Krishna ? If from Rama we remove the monkeys, how much of Rama is

there even in Rama ? Rama saw the Supreme in the monkeys too and became their friend and comrade. This is the key to the *Ramayana.* Without this key you would miss its beauty. The love of father and son, of mother and child, you will find elsewhere too, but this union, this sweet friendship between *nara* and *vanara*, between man and monkey, this you will find nowhere else. The Lord in the monkey, the *Ramayana* has made its own.

At sight of the monkeys, the *rishis* were filled with joy. From Ramtek to the banks of the Krishna those monkeys wandered and played, jumping from branch to branch, without once touching the ground. When the *rishis*, with their delicate sympathies, saw the dense forests and the monkeys at play, poetry welled up in their hearts, they were thrilled. The *Upanishads*, in describing the eyes of *brahman*, compare them to the eyes of a monkey. The monkey's eyes are very restless. They look on all sides at once. The eyes of *brahman* should be like this too. It would not do for the Lord to have His eyes fixed. It is all right for you and me to sit in meditation with eyes shut ; but if the Lord is lost in meditation, what would happen to the world ? So *rishis* see in monkeys the eyes of the Lord who watches all creatures. Learn to see the Lord in monkeys.

And then the peacock ! Peacocks are rare in Maharashtra, but they abound in Gujerat. When I was in Gujerat, I used to walk some ten miles daily, and saw many peacocks. When clouds gather and it is about to rain and the sky darkens, the peacocks begin to call. You will understand it only when you have once heard for yourself the piercing plaint drawn out from the depths of its heart. The structure of our music is built on this note of the peacock, which is our *shadjama svara*—"*shadjam rauti.*" This primary note we got from the peacock. Then, from it, we derived the other notes. Its face turned upwards to the clouds, its majestic

feathers spread out like an umbrella, as it hears the roaring clouds—what is man's finery before this beauty ? Kings and emperors too deck themselves elaborately, but how can they compete with the glory of the peacock's tail ? Those thousand eyes, that many-coloured brightness, the marvellously soft and lovely texture, the consummate worksmanship ! Look at this tail for a while, and see in it the presence of the Lord. All creation is decked out in this way. Wherever we turn, the Lord stands there for us to see, but we who do not see Him are wretched. Tukaram says :—

> "To the Lord, all times and places are auspicious ;
> only the wretched knows scarcity."

To the saints there is prosperity always, but we unfortunate ones are troubled by famine everywhere.

The worship of Agni is described in the Vedas. Agni is Narayana. What a brightly shining form he has ! When two sticks are rubbed against each other, he shines forth. Where was he hiding before ? What heat, what light ! The first sounds of the Veda emerged in the worship of Agni—

> "*agnimiile purohitam yajnasya devam rtvijam*
> *hotaaram ratnadhaatamam.*"

Look at that fire in whose worship the Vedas begin. When I see its flames, I am reminded of the excitement and agitation of our human souls. Whether it be the domestic or the forest fire, its flames are never steady. The man of detachment has no home. Wherever those flames are found, they set off excitement. They are ever in a state of agitation. They yearn to rise high. Scientists would say that they flicker because of ether, or because of the pressure of the wind. But so far as I am concerned, I see in the fire its eagerness to join the Supreme Being up there, the ocean of light, *Surya-narayana*, and hence its restless, perpetual upward movement. From birth to death without a pause, it leaps and runs. The sun is the whole of which the flames are parts. The part

yearns to rejoin the whole; it is only with extinction that the excitement ends, not before. It never considers how far away from the sun it is. All it knows is how to rise above the earth to its utmost capacity. Is this mere fire, is it not *vairagya*, freedom from attachment, shining as fire ? That is why the first sound of the Veda is "*agnimiile.*"

And how can one forget the cuckoo ? Whom does it call ? In the summer, when rivers and tanks have gone dry, tender young leaves sprout on the trees. It seems to ask, "Who gave this beauty to the trees ? Where is the giver of these gifts ?" How sweet, how eager is the call ! In the Hindu religion there is a *vrata*, an observance, relating to the cuckoo's voice. Women take a vow not to eat any food until they have heard the cuckoo's call. This *vrata* teaches us to see the Supreme manifest in the voice of the cuckoo. The cuckoo calls so sweetly that it seems to be chanting some *Upanishad*. One hears its voice, but does not see it. The English poet Wordsworth sings,—

> "O Cuckoo ! shall I call thee Bird,
> Or but a wandering Voice ?
>
> To seek thee did I often rove
> Through woods and on the green ;
> And thou wert still a hope, a love ;
> Still longed for, never seen."

While the great English poet wanders in search of the cuckoo, the ordinary women in Indian homes eat no food till they see it. This *kokila-vrata* confers on Indian women the status of poets. In the cuckoo that calls so sweetly bringing such joy, we see the Lord in His beauty.

If the cuckoo is beautiful, is the crow ugly ? No, the crow too is worthy of respect. To me it is very dear, with its deep black colour, and its deep strong voice. Do you think its voice raucous ? I don't; its voice too is sweet. As it comes

near, beating its wings, how lovely it looks ? Does it not capture the hearts of little children ? The little child refuses to take food, cooped up in the house. One has to take him out into the open yard and show him crows and sparrows before he can be persuaded to eat. Is the child mad that he so loves the crow ? Far from it, he is full of wisdom. At once the child becomes one with the Lord in the form of the crow. The mother may pour curds or milk on the rice, or cover it with sugar—nothing pleases the child. His pleasure is in the crow that flaps its wings and cocks its head.

All the fables of Aesop are based on the child's lively interest in the objects of creation. Aesop saw the Lord everywhere. Among the books I love I should give first place to Aesop's Fables ; I shall never forget it. Aesop's kingdom is not peopled only with human beings with two hands and two feet. In it, foxes, dogs, crows, deer, hares, tortoises, snakes, worms, all talk and laugh. It is a huge conference. The whole of creation speaks to Aesop. He had the divine vision. The *Ramayana* too is based on this truth, on this vision. Tulsidas describes the *lila* of Rama as a child. Rama is playing in the courtyard. A crow comes near and Rama approaches it slowly to catch it. The crow jumps back. At last Rama gets tired. But then an idea comes to him. He takes a sweet in his hand and draws nearer to it. As he stretches out his hand further, the crow comes closer. Tulsidas gives a page to this description ; because the crow is the Lord. The same divinity is present in the crow as well as in Rama. The coming together of Rama and the crow is the union of the Supreme with the Supreme.

(54) In villains too

The truth of the matter is that God is present in all the forms of creation. As holy rivers, mighty mountains, the majestic ocean, the tender-hearted cow, the noble steed, the magni-

ficent lion, the sweet-voiced cuckoo, the beautiful peacock, the pure hermit snake, the crow flapping its wings, the restless flame, the still star,—as all this, He is present. We should train our eyes to see Him. We should first learn the big letters and then the small ones ; we should first learn the easy letters and then the complex ones. Until we master the complex letters, there is no progress in learning to read. At every step, in word after word, the complex letters occur. We should learn to see the Lord who dwells in evil persons. We understand Rama, but we should learn to understand Ravana too. We understand Prahlada, but we should learn to understand Hiranyakasipu too. The *Vedas* say,—

" *namonamah stenaanaam pataye namonamah*
namah punjishthebhyo namo nishaadebhyah
brahma daashaa brahma daasaa brahmaiva ime kitavaah."

" Salutations to the prince of robbers ! Salutations to the cruel ones, to the doers of harm ! The thugs, the thieves, the robbers, all are *brahman.* Salutations to them all !"

What does this mean ? It means that, now that we have mastered the easy letters, we can proceed to the difficult ones. Carlyle has written a book on " Hero Worship." There he describes Napoleon as a hero, as a manifestation of God. What is found there is not the pure Supreme, but a mixture—but even this should be understood. So in Tulsidas, Ravana is called Rama's enemy-*bhakta.* Yes, the nature and conduct of this *bhakta* is rather peculiar. By contact with fire, the foot swells up in blisters, but the swelling subsides when a hot fomentation is applied. It is one and the same fire, but it manifests itself differently in different circumstances. Though manifested differently in Rama and in Ravana, it is the same Supreme that is present in both.

Gross and subtle, pure and mixed, simple and complex—learn all this and realise in the end that there is no place where

the Lord is not. In every atom He alone is present. From the ant to the universe, He spreads. The Lord who cares equally for all, the compassionate one who is all knowledge, tenderness, skill, holiness and beauty—He stands on all sides everywhere.

CHAPTER XI

THE VISION OF THE COSMIC FORM

(55) Arjuna's eagerness to see it

Brothers, we learned last week how to recognise the Supreme who pervades the countless objects of the Universe, and how to make this vast spectacle our own. How to see God first in the gross then in the subtle, first in the simple then in the complex and thus to see Him in all things; how to realise Him; how through practice day and night, to come to feel that the whole world is oneself—all this we saw in the last Chapter.

Now we turn to the Eleventh Chapter. In this Chapter the Lord reveals His visible form, and so His grace. Arjuna said, " Lord, I wish to behold with these eyes your complete form, the form in which is manifest all the power of your glory." What Arjuna prayed for was *visvarupa-darsana*, the vision of the cosmic form.

We use words like *visva* and *jagat*, the universe and the world. This world is a small part of the universe. And even this small part we are unable to understand. If we think of the whole universe, this world which seemed so vast now seems tiny. If we look up at the night sky we see innumerable orbs. Do we know the real nature of those festoons of light hung up in the heavens, those lovely little flowers, those millions of twinkling stars ? Each of those little stars is immensely big. Each is big enough to contain countless suns. They are shining spheres of elements burning. Who can count them ? They are beyond measure or limit. Even the naked eye sees thousands of them. When we look through a telescope millions become visible. With more powerful telescopes many more can be seen and it will be difficult to say where or how it will all end. Of this infinite creation spreading above, below and on all sides of us, a tiny bit is what we call our world. And how huge even this world appears to us !

This vast creation is but one aspect of the Lord's form. Now let us look at another aspect of it, that is, Time. If we consider the past, our knowledge of history goes back at most to ten thousand years. Of the time before that, we know nothing. While historical time is of the order of ten thousand years, our individual life's length is not even a hundred years. Time stretches without beginning or end. It is impossible to measure or count the time that is past. It is equally impossible to conceive the time that is to come. Just as our world is so tiny as against the vastness of space, our 10,000 years of history is as nothing in the infinity of Time ; the past is without a beginning and the future without an end. And as for this brief present, even as we are speaking, it slips into the past. Even as we try to describe where the present is, it has become the past. This so elusive present is all that belongs to us. I am speaking now ; but as the words come out of my mouth they have already joined the past. Thus this great river of time flows continuously forward. We know neither its source nor its end ; we see only a little part of the flow in the middle.

If we look at creation in these two ways, as a tremendous expanse of Space and a tremendous flood of Time, we cannot see the limits of it, however much we stretch our imagination. Arjuna conceived in his heart a desire to behold the form of the Supreme, to see all at once the omnipresent Lord, who pervades all Time, past, present and future, and all Space, here, above, below and everywhere. From this desire springs the Eleventh Chapter.

Arjuna was very dear to the Lord. How dear ? So dear that naming in the Tenth Chapter the forms in which he should be contemplated, the Lord says, " Among the Pandavas think of me as Arjuna." Sri Krishna says, "*paandavaanaam dhananjayah.*" Where can we find a stronger infatuation ? This shows how love can make one mad. The Lord's love for Arjuna knew no bounds. The Eleventh Chapter is the

gracious fulfilment of that love. Arjuna's desire to see the divine form, the Lord satisfied by endowing him with divine vision. He gave him the grace of His love.

(56) The full vision in the small image

In this Chapter is found a beautiful and entrancing description of the divine form. Though all this is true, I am not particularly drawn to this *visvarupa.* I am quite satisfied with a small image. I have learned to enjoy the sweetness of the small and common but beautiful image before me. The Lord is not cut up into little parts. It does not seem to me that the form of the Lord that we can see is only a part of Him and that the rest is left out ; but I see that the Lord who pervades this vast universe is present in His fullness in the little image, in the grain of sand. There is no question of greater or less. The sweetness of the ocean of nectar is found in every drop of it. I have got a tiny little drop of *amrta* (nectar of immortality) ; I feel that I should enjoy for ever the sweetness of that drop. I chose the example of *amrta,* and not milk or water, on purpose. A cup of milk is just as sweet as a pitcher of it ; but though the taste is the same, the nutritive power is different. But there is no difference between a drop of *amrta* and a cup of it. Not only the sweetness but the nourishment is the same in the sea of nectar and in a drop of it. If we but drink one drop of it, we gain the fullness of *amrtatva,* immortality.

In the same way, the same beauty and holiness that there is in the cosmic form of the Lord is also present in the little image. If I am not able to recognise wheat when I am shown a handful of it, of what use is it to put before me a sackful ? If I do not recognise Him in the little models before me, how can I recognise Him in all His vastness ? Does size make any difference ? To understand the small form is to understand the big. Hence I feel no desire that the Lord should show to me His cosmic form. Nor have I, like Arjuna,

the right to ask for it. Moreover, it is not as if what is seen by me is only a part of the cosmic form. If someone brought a part torn off from a picture, we cannot imagine from it the whole picture. But the Lord is not made up of parts in this way ; one part of Him cannot be cut off from the rest. Even in a little image, the whole of that infinite Supreme is contained. What is the difference between a small photograph and a big one. Everything that is found in the big one is found in the small too. The small one is not a portion, a fragment, of the big. A letter means the same whether it is written big or it is written small.

This is the meaning behind image-worship. Many people have opposed image-worship. Foreigners, and even thinkers of our own country, have found fault with it. But the more I think of it, the more I realise its beauty. What is the meaning of it ? Image-worship is the *vidya*, the art, of experiencing the whole universe in a little object. Is it wrong to learn the *vidya* which helps us to see the whole world in a little village ? This is not mere imagination, it is a matter of direct experience. What there is in the cosmic form, all of it is contained in a little image, in a grain of sand. In that lump of clay is everything—the mango, the banana, wheat, gold, copper and silver. All the world is in that grain of sand. Just as an actor in a small troupe appears again and again on the stage taking different roles, the Lord appears in the universe. Like a playwright who writes his own play and himself takes all the parts in it, the Lord produces a play without end, and Himself acts the parts of countless characters on His stage. If we understand one character in this infinite drama, we shall understand them all.

The basis of image-worship is the same as that of metaphors and similes in poetry. When we see a circle or a sphere we are filled with joy, for there is an order, a shapeliness in it. This shapeliness is a divine quality. The Lord's creation

is beautiful in all its parts and relations. There is perfect harmony in it. The sphere is an image of the shapeliness of the Lord. But even so is the twisted tree in the undergrowth of the forest. There is in it the freedom of the Lord. This tree knows no bondage. Who can bind the Lord ? The Lord who is beyond all bonds is in that contorted, unshapely tree. A tall straight column reminds us of the Lord. In the highly wrought ornamented pillar we see the Lord who has painted the sky with stars. In a well-trimmed garden we see the restraint of the Lord, and in the primeval forest we see His grandeur and freedom. In both we find joy. Are we then mad ? No, there is joy in both, because there is in each a quality of the Lord. The power in the smooth *salagram* is also in the rough *linga* taken from the Narmada. Hence, if I do not see the form of the Lord in all its majesty, it does not matter.

It is because the Lord is present in every object through a distinct quality, that we find joy in it, we feel at one with it. This joy is not without a cause. Why do we feel joy ? We are somehow related to it, and hence the joy. The mother's heart dances at the sight of her child, because she knows the kinship. In the same way, link every object to the Lord. The Lord in me is also in the object. To strengthen this kinship is to increase joy. There is no other means for joy. Begin to establish the link of love everywhere, and then watch the miracles happen. You will see then in every grain and every drop the Lord who pervades the boundless universe. When we have the power to see this, what else do we need ? For this, however, it is essential to discipline and train the senses. When the desire for enjoyment goes and the holy outlook of love is gained, then we shall see God alone in all objects. This idea is described beautifully in the *Upanishads*. What is the colour of the *atman* ? What can we say is the colour of the *atman* ? The *rishi* says, with love,

"*yathaa ayam indragopah.*"

The *atman* is like this scarlet silk-soft insect, the *indragopa.* When one looks at the *indragopa,* what joy there is! What is the source of this joy? That which exists in me, exists in the *indragopa* too. If there is no kinship between us, how could there be joy? The beautiful *atman* within me is within the *indragopa* too. Hence the comparison. Why do we use similes? Why do we find joy in them? We use similes because things are alike, and we find joy in the likeness. If the things compared have nothing in common, where is the joy in it? If someone says that salt is like pepper, we should think him mad. But if someone says that the stars are like flowers, we see the likeness and enjoy it. When we say, "Salt is like pepper," we do not experience the likeness, but to one whose vision has become wide enough to see the same Lord in the salt and in the pepper, the question, "What is salt like?" and the answer, "It is like pepper," will bring an experience of joy. The warp and the woof of all the objects in the world is the Lord's form. In every object in the world the warp and the woof are alike the Lord's form; to see it, where is the need for the vision of the cosmic form?

(57) Not for us the cosmic form

Even if we see the cosmic form, can we bear it? For a beautiful little image of the Lord I feel a sweetness of love, a sense of belonging, that I can never experience on seeing the cosmic form. Arjuna's state was not far different. He trembles and pleads at last, "Lord, let me see your dear familiar form again." Arjuna seems to tell us from his own experience, "Do not desire to see the cosmic form of the Lord." It is best that the Lord is seen pervading all the worlds, and all time, past, present and to come. If that distant star should draw itself up into a ball of fire and come down and stand in front of me, what would happen to me? How peaceful those stars appear! They seem to speak to

me from the far distance. But if the star, that calms the eye from afar, came near ? It is a burning ball. I would be reduced to ashes. Let all things be where they are and as they are in this boundless vast creation of the Lord. What joy can there be in huddling them all up into a single room ? Those thousands of doves in the aviary in Bombay, what freedom do they have ? It is a depressing sight. The pleasure is in this, that creation is divided into here, above and below. And the same is true of Time. We do not remember the past and of the future we know nothing—and this is only for our good. In the Holy Quran are mentioned five things where God has sole power and man is helpless. One of them is knowledge of the future. We are free to guess, but guessing is not knowledge. This ignorance concerning the future is indeed our good fortune. Likewise, our forgetfulness of the past is truly good. If a bad man becomes a good one, I do not respect him when I remember the past. No matter what he says, I am unable to forget his old sins. It is only when he dies and is reborn in another form that the world can forget his sins. Memories of the past increase our evil dispositions. When all past experience is forgotten, everything is over. There must be some way of forgetting the sins and virtues of the past. That way is death. When we cannot endure the sufferings of this birth, why rake up the muck-heaps of past *janmas* ? Is there not enough rubbish in the little room of this one life ? Even our childhood we tend to forget. And it is good to forget it. To achieve Hindu-Muslim unity the only means is to forget the past. Aurangazeb may have been a tyrant, but how long will you repeat it ? There is a Gujerati folk-song by Ratan Bai which one hears very often. Its concluding lines say, " The fame of men alone survives on earth, their sins are forgotten." Time is like a sieve. We should take only the good things of history and cast off the evil. If men would forget the evil and remem-

ber only good, how wonderful it would be ! But this does not happen. Forgetfulness is necessary, and that is why the Lord has given us death.

In truth, the world, as it is, is auspicious. Where is the need to gather up into a little spot this world of Time and Space ? Familiarity breeds contempt. We should be intimate with some things and keep others at a distance. Before our teacher we sit humbly, at a distance. But with our mother, we go and sit in her lap. There is an appropriate way of dealing with the various images of reality. While we draw close to a flower, we step back from the fire. The beauty of the stars is in their distance. This is so with all creation. It is not as if we shall increase our joy by bringing very near to us that which is very far away. Real pleasure lies in letting things be wherever they are. We cannot say that something that gives delight from afar will always confer greater comfort when brought near. We should leave it, out there, and enjoy it from afar. There is no meaning in an enforced familiarity. There is no saying that there is joy or good in knowing the past and the future. Arjuna, overmastered by love, importunately demanded, and the Lord yielded, and revealed to him the vision of His cosmic form. But, for me, the little image of the Lord will suffice. This little image is not a fragment of the Supreme. And even if it were, even if I saw only a foot or the toe of a foot of His boundless body, I would say, " How blessed I am ! How great is my good fortune !" I have learnt this from experience. When Shri Jamnalal Bajaj threw open to the Harijans the Lakshminarayan temple in Wardha, I too went there for *darshan*. For some fifteen or twenty minutes I stood gazing at the image. It was as if I was in *samadhi*. As I looked at the face, the chest, the hands and then the feet, my eyes were rooted in the feet. All that remained with me was the feeling, " Sweet indeed is the worship of Your Feet." If the

great Lord cannot be contained within a little image, is it not enough that we behold His Feet ? Arjuna pleaded with the Lord ; he could claim much from Him. How intimate was his friendship, how great his love and affection ! What claims have I ? A sight of the Feet is enough for me. That is more than I deserve.

(58) The Quintessence

On this description of the Lord's divine form, I do not wish to dwell with my mind ; to approach it with the mind would be sin. Let us read again and again the holy verses describing the cosmic form and become pure. I do not like to employ the mind to cut up the Lord's form. It would be like the *aghora* form of worship. Those who follow this path go to the cremation ground and, tearing off corpses, perform *tantra* worship. The divine form of the Lord—

> " *visvataschakshuruta visvatomukho*
> *visvato baahuruta visvataspaat*—"

it is widespread, infinite. Let us recite the verses describing it, cleanse the mind of sin and make it holy.

In this description of the Lord there is only one point at which the mind begins to think. The Lord tells Arjuna, " Arjuna, all these are mortal ; make yourself an occasion, an instrument—I am the real doer of all action." These words keep ringing in one's heart. When the thought arises in the mind that one should make oneself an instrument in the Lord's hand, then the mind begins to reflect. How does one make oneself an instrument in God's hand ? How does one become a flute in Krishna's hands ? What would it be like if He put me to his lips and drew sweet notes through me ? To be a flute means to become hollow. But I am stuffed full with passions and desires. How then can music come through me ? My tone is gruff. I am gross. I am filled with *aham-kara*, the sense of ' I.' I must empty myself of ego. Only when I become fully free, altogether empty,

will the Lord breathe through me. But to become a flute at the lips of the Lord is a deed of very great daring. If I wish to become the sandals beneath His feet, even that would not be easy. The sandals of the Lord should be so soft that they will cause no pain to His feet. I should place myself between His feet and the thorns and stones. I should cure and refine myself continually, and grow softer and softer. And so it is not easy to become even the sandals of the Lord. If I am to be wielded as a sword by the Lord, I must not be a massive lump of iron. I should whet myself on the grindstone of *tapas*, penance, and acquire a keen and tempered edge. My life should shine like a sword in the hands of the Lord. These thoughts arise in my mind. I am lost in the wish to become an instrument. How this can come to be, the Lord Himself tells us in the last *sloka* of this Chapter. Sankaracharya in his commentary calls this *sloka*, *sarvartha sara*, the quintessence of the *Gita*. It runs—

" *matkarmakrt matparamo madbhaktah sangavarjitah*
nirvairassarvabhuteshu yah sa maameti paandava."

" He, who bears enmity towards none, he who stands impartial and is free from attachment and serves me selflessly, he who dedicates to me all that he does, he who is filled with devotion to me, all-enduring, free of passion and desire, full of love, such a devotee becomes an instrument in the hand of the Lord." This is the essence of the *Gita's* teaching.

CHAPTER XII

BHAKTI—SAGUNA AND NIRGUNA

(59) From one-pointedness to universality—Chapters 6 to 11

The waters of the Ganga are everywhere holy and cleansing, but at Haridwar, Kasi and Prayag, they have a special purity. They have made the whole world holy. The *Gita* too is sacred from beginning to end. But some of the intermediate Chapters have become holy places. One such place is the Twelfth Chapter. The Lord Himself calls this " the stream of nectar "—" *ye tu dharmyaamrtam idam yathoktam paryupaasate.*" This is a small Chapter with only twenty *slokas*; nevertheless it is a stream of nectar. It is sweet like nectar and confers a new and immortal life. In this Chapter, the Lord has Himself sung the essence of the glory of devotion, *bhakti.*

In reality, from the Sixth Chapter onwards, the philosophy of *bhakti* has been expounded. The exposition of the science of life occupied us in the first five Chapters. The *karma* which consists in the performance of *svadharma*, the *vikarma*, the accompanying inner process which helps *karma*, and the final state of *akarma* resulting from the practice of both, which turns to ashes all *karma*—these ideas were expounded in the first five Chapters. With this, the science of life is complete. Then, from the Sixth Chapter to the end of the Eleventh Chapter, a kind of enquiry into the philosophy of *bhakti* engaged us. It began with *ekagrata*, one-pointedness. The Sixth Chapter describes how to make the mind one-pointed, the means to this end, and the need for it. The Eleventh Chapter describes *samagrata*, choiceless universal awareness. We should now see how we made the long journey from *ekagrata* to *samagrata*.

We began with one-pointedness of mind. Once concentration has been attained, one can pursue any subject. To

mention a subject which I like, we can apply the concentrated mind to the study of mathematics. Assuredly, we gain much by this. But this is not the highest good we can get from concentration of mind. We cannot judge the full value of concentration by the study of mathematics. Through concentration we may achieve high success in mathematics and other branches of knowledge, but this is no true test of its value. Therefore the Seventh Chapter tells us that it is towards the feet of the Lord that our vision must be turned. The Eighth Chapter says that we should unceasingly concentrate on the feet of the Lord—that we should try till the moment of death to keep our eyes and ears, our speech, absorbed in them. All our senses should be thus trained. " The senses are now at home here; except through this awareness, they see nothing." All the senses should be filled with the Lord. Whether those around us are lamenting loudly or praising the Lord, whether they are weaving webs of *vasanas*, or are saints free from desire, whether it is night or day, the practice of constancy throughout life in order that at the moment of death the Lord may stand in front of us—this is taught in the Eighth Chapter. In the Sixth Chapter, *ekagrata*, one-pointedness ; in the Seventh Chapter, *ekagrata* towards the Lord, which is *prapatti* or surrender ; in the Eighth Chapter, *satatya* or constancy, and in the Ninth Chapter, *samarpana* or perfect dedication and service—these are described. In the Tenth Chapter, the order of progression, the successive stages are described—how to proceed step by step, how to receive the image of the Lord in one's heart, how gradually to realise the Supreme Being who pervades all things from the little ant to Brahmadeva. The Eleventh Chapter describes *samagrata*, cosmic awareness. It is the vision of the cosmic form that I call *samagrata-yoga*. The vision of the cosmic form is to experience all creation in a grain of sand. This is the *virat darsan*. Thus, between the Sixth and the Eleventh

Chapters, *bhakti rasa* is passed again and again through various filters.

(60) The saguna devotee and the nirguna devotee—both children of the same mother

Now, in the Twelfth Chapter we come to the end of the treatment of the philosophy of *bhakti*. Arjuna questions the Lord here about the perfect state, as once before in the Fifth Chapter he questioned Him at the end of the discussion about the philosophy of life. Arjuna asks, " Lord, some worship you as *saguna*, with form; others as *nirguna*, without form. Tell me which of the two pleases you more."

What answer could the Lord give ? This is like asking a mother to choose between her two sons. One of the two is a little child, who clings to his mother, who is filled with joy at sight of his mother, and cries when he is parted from her even for a moment. Without her the world seems empty to him. This is the younger son. The other son is older. He too loves his mother dearly, but he has grown up and has reached the age of discretion. He can bear to stay away from his mother. Even if he has to stay away from her for five or six months, he would not mind it. He serves his mother, taking full responsibility on himself. Because he is busy with his work, he is able to endure separation from her. He is respected by the world, and his mother is happy listening to people speaking highly of him. That is the elder son. If the mother is asked, " You can keep only one of these two sons. Which of them would you have ?" what answer could she give ? Which son would she choose ? Could she weigh them in a balance ? Considering the mother's situation, what would be her natural answer ? In her helplessness, she would say, " If I must give up one of them, I shall reconcile myself to parting from the elder son." She holds the little child closer to herself, she cannot let him go. Drawn by the younger child, she might say something like, " It would

not matter so much if the elder son goes." But this is no real answer to the question, which of the sons she loves more. She says it because she has to say something. But it would not be right to dig into the meaning of her words.

The Lord had to face the same difficulty as this mother, when Arjuna questioned Him. Arjuna asked, "Lord, you have two kinds of *bhaktas*. One of them loves you dearly and always thinks of you. His eyes yearn to see you, his ears to hear your praise, his hands and feet to serve you. The other, more self-reliant, self-controlled, concerned for the welfare of all creatures, is so absorbed, day and night, in the disinterested service of society, that he seems not to think of you at all. He is a *bhakta* filled with a sense of oneness. Tell me which of them is dearer to you." Like the mother in the story, Krishna too says, "The *saguna bhakta* is dear to me. But the other *bhakta*, the *advaiti*, is also dear to me." The Lord too is in a dilemma—he gives some sort of an answer.

And as a matter of fact, the two *bhaktas* are very much alike in every way. Their claims are equal. To judge between them is to attempt something improper and impossible. As Arjuna questioned the Lord about *karma* in the Fifth Chapter, so he questions Him about *bhakti* here. In the Fifth Chapter, it is said that, with the help of *karma* and *vikarma*, man attains the state of *akarma*. This state of *akarma* appears in two forms—while in one, a man acts day and night and yet does nothing, in the other, though he seems to do nothing all the twenty-four hours of the day, he turns the whole world upside down. *Akarma* appears in these two forms. How to compare them ? One can compare a segment of a circle with that of another. But how can we compare two segments of the same circle ? Both have the same shape and properties —they have the same form. But in describing the basis of *akarma*, the Lord calls the one *sannyasa* and the other *karma-*

yoga. Though the names are different, the substance is the same. In the end, the choice is left to be decided according to which is easier and more accessible.

The problem of *saguna* and *nirguna* is similar. The *saguna* devotee serves the Lord through the *indriyas*, the organs of perception and action ; the *nirguna* devotee thinks constantly of the good of all the world. The first appears absorbed in outward service, but he meditates constantly within. The other seems to do no direct service, but within him a great service is going on. Which of these two *bhaktas* is superior ? The one who works day and night and yet does not act, he is the *saguna* devotee. The *nirguna* devotee is one who is concerned within for the good of all, is thinking constantly of them. Though differing outwardly, the two are of the same nature within, and both are dear to the Lord. But, of the two, *saguna bhakti* is much the easier. Here again the Lord gives the same answer that He gave in the Fifth Chapter.

(61) Saguna is easy and safe

In the *yoga* of *saguna bhakti*, we directly employ the *indriyas*. The *indriyas* can be either a help or a hindrance or both. Whether they save or destroy depends on the way we look at them. Suppose that a man's mother is at the point of death, and wishes to see him ; but there is a distance of fifteen miles between them. It is wild, uneven country, with only a footpath. In this situation, is the footpath a help or a hindrance ? He might say, " What a wretched track ! But for this, I would be by my mother's side this moment !" To such a man, the path appears an enemy. But he manages somehow to walk the distance, all the time cursing the path. But, whatever the difficulties of the path, he has to keep going and hurry forward. If he looks on the path as his enemy and sits down in despair, the victory will go to his enemy, the path. But by running fast, he achieves victory.

Another man in the same plight may say, " In this wilderness, thank God there is at least this narrow path. This will help me to reach my ailing mother. If even this were not available, how could I hope to cross the hills and jungles?" With gratitude he accepts the footpath as a ready means. He regards it with affection, as a friend, not an enemy. Whether you regard it as a friend or an enemy, as a help or a hindrance, you have to walk swiftly along the path. Whether the path is an aid or an obstacle—this depends on the outlook of the man who treads it. This applies to the *indriyas* also. Whether they are a help or a hindrance depends on the way you look at it.

For the *saguna* worshipper, the *indriyas* are an aid. They are like flowers to be offered up to the Lord. With his eyes, he beholds His form ; with his ears, he listens to His story ; with his mouth, he utters His holy name ; on his feet he performs pilgrimages ; and with his hands, renders service. In this way he dedicates all his *indriyas* to the Lord. They are not there for enjoyment. The flowers are there to be offered to the Lord, not to be worn round one's neck. Thus he uses all his senses in the service of the Lord. This is the way of the *saguna* worshipper.

But to the *nirguna* worshipper, the senses seem to be an obstruction. He keeps them under control ; he locks them up in a room. He starves them and stands guard over them. The *saguna* worshipper feels no need for such care. He has surrendered his *indriyas* at the feet of the Lord. Both these are methods of controlling the *indriyas*, two ways of restraining them. But whichever method we adopt, we must keep the *indriyas* under control. The aim of both the methods is the same—to prevent them from wallowing in the pleasures of the senses. One method is easy, the other difficult.

The *nirguna* worshipper is devoted to the welfare of all beings. This is no ordinary matter. " To work for the good

of all the world" is a thing easy to say, but difficult to practise. One devoted to the good of the world can think of nothing else. That is why *nirguna* worship is difficult. *Saguna* worship, however, can be rendered in many ways, according to one's powers and opportunities. To serve the little village we were born in, to look after one's parents, this is *saguna* worship. All we have to make sure is that we do not work against the welfare of the world. No matter how insignificant your service is, so long as it causes no harm to others, it will ascend the scale of *bhakti*; otherwise, it would become a form of attachment. Whether it is our parents or our friends, our suffering kinsfolk or great saints, that we serve, we should regard them as the Lord. Imagine that in every one of them you see an image of the Lord and rest satisfied. This *saguna* worship is easy, but *nirguna* worship is hard. The meaning and substance of the two are the same. But *saguna* is easier, and therefore better. That is all.

Apart from ease, there is another advantage in *saguna* worship. There is danger in *nirguna* worship. *Nirguna* is all *jnana*, knowledge. But *saguna* is full of love, of *bhavana*, of feeling. There is the moisture of the heart in it and perfect safety for the *bhakta*. In *nirguna*, however, there is some danger. There was a time when I relied on *jnana*, but now experience has taught me that mere *jnana* is not enough. It is true that *jnana* reduces to ashes the grosser imperfections of the heart, but the subtler impurities, it cannot destroy. Self-reliance, reason, discrimination, discipline, detachment —even if you employ all these, the subtle impurities cannot be removed. Only the waters of *bhakti* have the power to cleanse them. If you like, you can call this "*para-avalambana*," dependence on *para*, but this *para* does not mean "another," but "the Supreme." Except with the help of the Lord, we cannot get rid of our impurities.

Some may say that we are here giving a narrow meaning to the word "*jnana*," that if *jnana* cannot cleanse the mind, its value is reduced. I accept this objection, but what I say is that as long as we are in this physical body, our knowledge, however pure it is, will have some impurity, some distortion, some imperfection—its power will be limited. When pure *jnana* rises, I have not the slightest doubt that it will destroy every impurity, along with the mind. But in this troubled and passionate flesh its power is reduced, and it cannot remove the subtler impurities. This is why *bhakti* is necessary. Hence I say that in *bhakti* man is better protected. *Saguna bhakti* is easy. It relies on the Supreme, while *nirguna bhakti* trusts to oneself. But what is the self that one trusts ? It is reliance on the Supreme that dwells within oneself. There is no man who attained purity with the help of the mind alone. Through self-reliance, that is, through realisation of the Self within, pure knowledge is attained. In other words even in the self-reliance of *nirguna bhakti*, the ground is the *atman*, the self.

(62) Without nirguna, saguna too has defects

Just as I said that *saguna* worship is easy and safe, I can point to similar advantages in *nirguna bhakti* too. In *nirguna*, there is a discipline, a restraint. For example, we start institutions for various kinds of service. Each of these is built round an individual ; he is its main support. In the beginning, the institution rests on a personality. But as it grows, it should derive its strength not from an individual but from a principle. If such fidelity to a principle does not develop in it, the moment the founder and inspirer dies it is filled with darkness and falls into ruin. Let me give an illustration I am fond of. When the belt of the *charkha* snaps, not only are we prevented from spinning any more, but we cannot transfer the spun yarn to the spindle. This is what happens to the institution. When the man dies—

it is orphaned. But this does not happen when fidelity to a person has been replaced by fidelity to a principle. *Saguna*, the personal, needs the help of *nirguna*, the impersonal. Now and again, we should learn to get out of the personal, the visible. The Ganga sprang from the Himalayas, the matted locks of Siva, but she did not stop there. It was only when she emerged from them, and crossing mountains, valleys and forests, began to flow on the plains, making music, that she was useful to people. In the same way, an institution should be ready to stand on the pillars of principle even after the personality behind it is removed. When a builder puts up an arch, he supports it from below ; but once the arch is set, the support is removed. It is only when it stands without the support, that we say that the support has done its work. It is true that the river of inspiration rises in *saguna*, but it should reach perfection in fidelity to principle, it should flow into *nirguna*. From the womb of *bhakti*, *jnana* should be born. From the creeper of *bhakti*, the flower of *jnana* should blossom.

The Lord Buddha knew this. Hence he prescribed the three dedications. Though at first the attachment is to a person, there should develop from it attachment to principle ; if this is not possible all at once, there should be, at least, attachment to the institution, in between. The loyalty which once was paid to an individual, must now spread to ten or fifteen. When there is no loyalty to a *sangha* or an institution, the members would start quarrelling among themselves. First dedication to an individual, then dedication to an institution, and finally, dedication to the principle. That is why the Buddhists take three vows of dedication—

" *buddham saranam gachhaami*
sangham saranam gachhaami
dhammam saranam gachhaami."

First, loyalty to the person, then to the *sangha*, but neither of these is strong enough. Only when loyalty to principles is established, the institution begins to produce results. The stream of inspiration may begin in *saguna*, but should meet and merge in the sea of *nirguna*. Without *nirguna*, *saguna* is imperfect. *Nirguna* keeps *saguna* from overflowing its proper bounds—hence *saguna* owes much to it.

In Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and all other religions, there is image-worship in one from or another. Though not the highest form of worship, it is considered worthy of respect, and something valuable in itself. Image-worship is free from defect only so long as it remains within the bounds of *nirguna*. Once it crosses these bounds, defects appear in *saguna*. Any religion which blurs the line between *saguna* and *nirguna* declines and falls. In the ancient *yagas*, animal sacrifices were offered. Even now, worshippers of *Sakti* sacrifice living animals to her. This is the excess of image-worship. Here it has crossed its proper bounds, and has taken a wrong turn. But if there is the restraint of loyalty to principle, there is no such danger.

(63) The two are complementary—example from the Ramayana

Saguna is not only easy but free from danger, but it needs *nirguna* to complete it. As *saguna* grows, the flower of *nirguna*, of devotion to principle, should blossom. *Nirguna* and *saguna* complement each other ; they are not incompatible. Starting from *saguna*, one has to tread the path to the goal of *nirguna* : *nirguna*, too, needs the waters of *saguna* to cleanse the subtle impurities of the mind. Each gains lustre from the other. Both these kinds of *bhakti* are nobly illustrated throughout the *Ramayana*, especially in the *Ayodhya Kanda*. Bharata illustrates the *nirguna* form of *bhakti*, and Lakshmana, the *saguna* form.

When Rama set out for the forest, he did not intend to take Lakshmana with him. Rama did not think it was at all necessary. He tried to console him, saying, " Lakshmana, I am going to the forest at the bidding of our father. You should stay at home. By coming with me, you would only add to the suffering of our parents. Serve our parents and our people. If you stay with them, I shall be free from care. Stay here in my place, and do my duty for me. In going to the forest, I am facing no danger. I am only visiting *asramas* of *rishis*." With one word, Lakshmana makes a clean sweep of all Rama's arguments. Tulsidas pictures this incident vividly. Lakshmana's answer is, " You have shown me the noblest path ! It is also true that I ought to adopt it. But then, I shall not be able to bear the burden of ruling the state. I have not the strength to act in your place. I am only a child. "

" *diinhi mohi sikh niiki gosaa(n)yi*
laagi agam apnii kadaraaii
narvar dhiir dharam-dhur-dhaari
nigam-niitike te adhikaari.
mai(n) sisu prabhu-saneh-pratipaalaa
mandaru meru ki lehi(n) maraalaa."

Lakshmana says, " How can the swan sustain the weight of Mount Meru ? Till this moment, Rama, I have grown up nourished by your love. All this statesmanship, you can preach to someone else. I am only a child," and so puts a stop to the discussion.

Just as fish cannot live without water, Lakshmana could not live without Rama. He had not the strength for it. With all his being, he lived in and for Rama. When Rama slept, he found joy in keeping awake and serving him. When the eye is threatened, the hand rushes up to protect it, and takes the blow upon itself ; in this way, Lakshmana had become the hand of Rama. If there was a blow aimed

at Rama, Lakshmana received it first. Tulsidas illustrates this by a beautiful simile. The flag flies high and is greeted with songs of honour and praise. Its colours and form are the subject of song and story. But who looks at the staff that stands straight and holds it? Like the staff that sustains the flag, Lakshmana upholds Rama's fame. He stands straight and never bows or bends. The fame is Rama's, and it fills the eyes of the world ; but who observes the staff ? The dome is conspicuous, but the foundation catches no eye. Rama's glory fills the world, but few think of Lakshmana. For fourteen years, this staff stood straight and strong, did not bend. He stayed in the background and spread Rama's greatness. Rama used Lakshmana to achieve some of his most difficult deeds. In the end, he entrusted to Lakshmana even the task of taking Sita and leaving her in the forest. Poor Lakshmana did this too. Lakshmana was left with no separate existence of his own. He had become Rama's eyes, Rama's hands and feet, Rama's mind. As the river becomes one with the sea, Lakshmana's service had become one with Rama. He had become Rama's shadow. This devotion of Lakshmana was *saguna bhakti.*

But Bharata practises *nirguna bhakti.* And this too, Tulsidas has pictured beautifully. When Rama left for the forest, Bharata was not in Ayodhya. When Bharata returned home, Dasaratha had already died. Vasishtha, the *guru,* advised Bharata to assume the rule of the State. But Bharata answered, " I must see Rama." He was anxious to see Rama ; at the same time, he also made arrangements for looking after the kingdom. His *bhavana* was, " The kingdom is Rama's. To arrange for its administration is to do Rama's work. The property belongs to the owner, to manage it alone is my duty." Bharata could not feel as free as Lakshmana. This is Bharata's position. Devotion to Rama means carrying out the work of Rama ; else what

good is devotion ? After making all arrangements for the care of the state, he goes to the forest to meet Rama. He says to Rama, " Dear brother, this is your kingdom. It is for you..............."but before he could complete the sentence, Rama intervenes, " No Bharata, please look after the kingdom yourself." Bharata stands still, shrinking from a refusal. He says, " I shall faithfully obey your command." Whatever Rama says, he has to accept. All that was his, he had already surrendered to Rama. He went back and performed the duties of the state. But he did this, not from Ayodhya, but from a place two miles away, where he lived and did penance. As an ascetic he ruled the kingdom. When Rama and Bharata met again, it was difficult to make out which of them was the ascetic who had performed penance in the forest. The two faces are alike, they are of the same age, they bear the same marks of *tapasya* on their faces—it is impossible to say which is Rama and which is Bharata. If someone could paint this situation, how noble it would be ! Though Bharata was physically far away from Rama, in spirit, they were not separated even for an instant. Though he attended to the affairs of the kingdom, his heart was all the time with Rama. *Nirguna bhakti* is filled to the brim with *saguna*. How then could there be any thought of separation from Rama ? Bharata never felt any sense of separation from Rama. He was doing the work of his lord.

The young people of today say, " We don't understand all this about Rama-*nama*, Rama-*bhakti*, and Rama-worship. But we shall do God's work." How God's work is to be done, Bharata has shown us by his example. By doing God's work, he assimilated and transformed the separation from Rama. To keep doing God's work and so to have no time even to feel the sense of separation from Him, is one thing; but, it is quite a different thing when one has no dealings

with God at all. To live a life of self-control, doing the work of the Lord, is rare indeed. Though Bharata's way of life is to work in the spirit of *nirguna*, it never loses contact with its *saguna* basis. " Rama, my lord," he says, " I shall humbly do your bidding. Whatever you say, I shall not doubt or question." But then, as he prepares to leave, he turns again to Rama, and says, " Lord, but my heart is yet unreconciled. I feel as if I've lost something." Rama at once understood his yearning and said, " Here, take these sandals." In the end, the respect for *saguna* remains. In the end, *saguna* has moistened *nirguna* with the heart's affections. Lakshmana would not have been content with Rama's sandals. In his view, it would have been like drinking buttermilk when one thirsts for milk. Bharata's standpoint is different. Though outwardly he stayed far away and worked, his heart was full of Rama. Though Bharata thought that devotion to Rama consisted in doing his duty, he still felt the need for the sandals. Without them, he could not bear the burden of kingship. He did his duty, deriving his authority from the sandals. As Lakshmana was a *bhakta* of Rama, so too was Bharata. But in appearance they differ. Though Bharata was firm in his loyalty to duty and principle, he too needed the living warmth of the symbol.

(64) An example from the story of Krishna

The sap of *Hari-bhakti*, devotion to the Lord, is essential. Hence the Lord tells Arjuna again and again, " *mayyaasaktamanaah paartha*,"—" Arjuna, be devoted to me, rely on me, and so keep working." The refrain of the *Bhagavad Gita* is " *anasakti*," " *nissangata* " (non-attachment). It dislikes and avoids the very word " *asakti*," attachment. It repeatedly insists that one should remain unattached while performing action, that one should act without desire and without hatred, that one should act regardless of the fruit. It is this *Bhagavad Gita* that says here, " Arjuna, be attached

to me." But here, we must remember that attachment to the Lord is a noble thing. It is not like the attachment to any object in the world. *Saguna* and *nirguna* are closely intertwined. *Saguna* can never be removed from its *nirguna* ground. *Nirguna* needs the sap of *saguna*. A man who is ever busy doing his duty is worshipping God through work. But the moisture, the *rasa* of love, should go into the worship. "*maamanusmara yuddhya cha.*" "Work with me in mind." Yes, work is *puja*, worship. But the *bhavana* within should be kept alive. The mere offering of flowers is not *puja*. There must go with it *bhavana*, the appropriate inner attitude. *Puja* with flowers is one way of worship ; doing good actions is another way. But in both the moisture of *bhavana* is essential. If when we offer flowers, there is no *bhavana* within, it is as if we are flinging flowers on a mere stone. Therefore, the real thing is *bhavana*, the inward approach. Whether we make the approach through form or the formless, through knowledge or devotion, through action or love, it is essentially the same. The final experience from one is the same as that from the other.

Look at Uddhava and Arjuna. I have taken a big jump from the *Ramayana* to the *Mahabharata*. But then I have a right to do it, for Rama and Krishna are both one. As Bharata stands to Lakshmana, so Arjuna does to Uddhava. Wherever Krishna is, there Uddhava has to be. He cannot bear even a moment's separation from Krishna. He is ever absorbed in the service of Sri Krishna. Without Krishna, the whole world appears dull and tasteless to him. Arjuna too was Krishna's friend, but he lived far away in Delhi. Arjuna was a servant of Krishna, he was the doer of His work ; but while Krishna was in Dvaraka, Arjuna was in Hastinapura. Such was their relationship. When it was time for Krishna to leave his body, he said to Uddhava, "Udho, I am going now." Uddhava pleaded, "Won't

you take me with you ? Come, let us go together." But Krishna answered, " I am not for that. When the sun sets, it leaves its brightness in fire ; so let me leave my light with you." Thus the Lord made his final arrangements and sent Uddhava forth with the light of *jnana*. Later, on his journey, Uddhava comes to know through Rishi Maitreya that the Lord had returned to His home in Vaikuntha. But his heart did not grieve in the least over the news ; it did not appear to him that anything much had happened. You know the saying, " The master died and the pupil cried. The teaching and the learning were both wasted ! " Such was not the state of Uddhava. He did not feel that there was any separation. All his life he had performed *saguna* worship and lived in the presence of the Lord. But now he had begun to experience the joy even of *nirguna*. In this way he had traversed the path to *nirguna*. *Saguna* may come first, but the next step of *nirguna* has to follow ; otherwise there is no completeness.

Arjuna's state is just the opposite. What had Krishna asked him to do ? He had entrusted to him the duty of protecting the women after his lifetime. Arjuna had gone from Delhi to Dvaraka and was returning with the ladies. At Hissar, in the Punjab, on the way, some robbers stopped and plundered them. Arjuna was considered the most valiant man of his age ; he was famous as a hero. He was celebrated as Jaya, the victorious ; he had confronted Siva face to face and made Him bow to him. And this Arjuna, in the neighbourhood of Ajmer, took to his feet and fled. Because he had parted from Krishna, his mind was quite upset ; it was as if he had lost his life. All that remained was an unsupported corpse. The fact is that Arjuna, the *nirguna* worshipper who had constantly performed *karma* and lived far away from Krishna, found in the end that this separation was unbearable. His *nirguna* gave way at last

under this stress. It was as if he had come to the end of all *karma*. *Saguna* experience came at last to complete his *nirguna bhakti*. That is, *saguna* has to go towards *nirguna* and *nirguna* has to come towards *saguna*. Thus each completes the other.

(65) Both are one—personal experience

Therefore, when we begin to describe the differences between the *saguna* and the *nirguna* worshipper, it becomes difficult. In the end, *saguna* and *nirguna* become one. Though the stream of *bhakti* springs from *saguna*, it reaches *nirguna* in the end. Here is an old story. I had gone to Vaikom to observe the satyagraha there. I remembered the geographical fact that Sankaracharya's birthplace was on the border of Malabar. I had a feeling that Sankara's village, Kaladi, was somewhere near. I asked the Malayali gentleman who accompanied me. He said, "It is some 10 or 12 miles from here. Do you want to go there ?" I said I did not. I was going to see the satyagraha in progress, and it did not seem proper to go elsewhere. So on that occasion I did not go to that village. Even now it seems to me that I was right in not going there then. But that night, when I went to bed, that village of Kaladi and the image of Sankaracharya stood before my eyes again and again. I could not sleep. That experience is still with me, as fresh today as it was then. Again and again that night, I thought of Sankaracharya—of the power of his *jnana*, his divine certitude in *advaita*, the extraordinary, glowing *vairagya*, non-attachment, which convinced him that *samsara*, this phenomenal life, was all false, of the majesty of his language and the boundless help I have received from him. All night long these images stood before me. Then I realised how *nirguna* is filled to the brim with *saguna*. Even seeing him face to face would not have evoked such love. Even *nirguna* is filled full with *saguna*. For the most part, I do not write

letters to friends to enquire about their welfare. But even when I do not write to a friend, the thought of him is ever present, it fills my mind. Thus, *saguna* lies hidden in *nirguna*. *Saguna* and *nirguna* are indeed one. Placing an image before us and worshipping it with visible outward service, on the one hand, and on the other, being constantly concerned inwardly with the world's welfare, while performing no outward acts of worship—both these have the same worth and value.

(66) Therefore let us attain the qualities of the bhakta

Finally, we must admit that it is difficult to distinguish between what is *saguna* and what is *nirguna*. What looks like *saguna* from one point of view may be *nirguna* from another. We worship *saguna* by placing a stone in front of us and performing *puja*. In this stone we conceive the presence of God. In our mother and in saints, we see the visible presence of *chaitanya*, the living spirit. In them *jnana*, love and warmth of heart shine clear. But we do not regard them as the Supreme, we do not worship them. Such people, filled with the living spirit, are seen by us all. We should therefore serve them ; we should see in them the concrete manifestation of the Supreme. And yet, instead of doing this, people prefer to see the Lord in a stone. To see the Lord in a stone is in a sense the ultimate limit of *nirguna*. In the saints, in one's parents, in one's neighbours, love and knowledge and willingness to help are manifest. It is easy to conceive the presence of God in them ; but it is difficult to conceive it in a stone. The stone that lies in the *Narmada*, we regard as Siva. Is not this *nirguna* worship ? But, on the contrary, if we do not conceive the presence of God in the stone, where else can we conceive it ? It is only the stone that is fit to be the image of the Lord. It is changeless, full of peace. Light or darkness, heat or cold, the stone remains the same. This changeless,

passionless stone is best fitted to be a symbol of the Lord. Father, mother, neighbour, the people, all these are subject to passion and change. Therefore, in one sense, it is more difficult to serve these than to serve the stone.

The truth of the matter is that *saguna* and *nirguna* complete each other. *Saguna* is easy and *nirguna* difficult. But from another point of view, *saguna* is difficult and *nirguna* easy. Both these means take us to the same end. The Fifth Chapter told us that the *yogi* who works all the twenty-four hours of the day and yet does nothing is the same as the *sannyasi* who does nothing all the day and yet does everything. Similarly, the state of action, which is *saguna*, and the *yoga* of *sannyasa* which is *nirguna*, are the same. The difficulty which the Lord faced in answering the question, " Is *sannyasa* or *yoga*, renunciation or action, better ? ", the same difficulty the Lord faces here. Finally it became necessary to decide on the basis of which was easier and which was more difficult. Otherwise action and renunciation, *saguna* and *nirguna*, are both the same. In the end, the Lord says, " Arjuna whether you are a *saguna bhakta* or a *nirguna bhakta*, it does not matter. Only be a *bhakta*, and not a stupid stone." And after saying this, He describes the qualities of a *bhakta*. Nectar may be sweet, but we have had no chance of tasting it. But the sweetness of these qualities we can taste for ourselves. There is no need to imagine them. Let us experience these qualities. The qualities of the *bhakta* in the Twelfth Chapter are—like those of the *sthitaprajna* in the Second Chapter —to be read every day, reflected upon, and brought into practice by stages so that our lives may gain strength. In this way, we should, little by little, turn our lives towards God.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SELF AND THE NON-SELF

(67) Distinguishing between body and soul helps karma-yoga

Vyasadev has poured into the *Bhagavad Gita* the essence of his life. He has written many other long works. The *Mahabharata* alone contains a hundred or a hundred and twenty-five thousand slokas. In Sanskrit, the very word Vyasa has acquired the meaning of extensiveness. But, in the *Gita*, he did not pursue elaboration. As Euclid in his " Elements of Geometry " states propositions and formulates principles, Vyasadev, in the *Gita*, gives us the principles useful for living. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, there is no long discussion, nothing elaborate. The main reason for this is that everything stated in the *Gita* is meant to be tested in the life of every man ; it is intended to be verified in practice. Only what is necessary for the conduct of life is set down in the *Gita*. Vyasa's intention too was only this, and hence he was content with a brief statement of principles. From this contentment we can see for ourselves how great was his faith in truth and self-realisation. When a thing is true, there is no need to use any arguments to substantiate it.

The main reason why we look constantly to the *Gita* is that, whenever we need help, we may get it from the *Gita*. And, indeed, we always do get it. Because the *Gita* is a science applicable to life, it emphasises *svadharma*. If there is one strong support for man's life, it is the performance of *svadharma*. All the superstructure has to be built on *svadharma*. The strength of the superstructure depends on the strength of the foundation. It is the performance of *svadharma* that the *Gita* calls *karma*. Around this *karma*, which is the performance of *svadharma*, the Gita arranges a number of other matters. To safeguard this, many *vikarmas* are

conceived. To give beauty to the performance of *svadharma*, to crown it with success, it should be given all the help and support that it needs. That is why we have been considering many such aids so far. Many of them were in the form of *bhakti*. Today, in the Thirteenth Chapter, we come to another aid in the performance of *svadharma* ; this is related to the intellectual aspect.

The *Gita* stresses everywhere that the man who performs *svadharma* should give up the fruit. One must act, but one must also renounce the fruit. Water the tree, tend it with care, but do not desire to enjoy its shade or fruit or flower. This is *karma-yoga* through the practice of *svadharma*. *Karma-yoga* does not mean merely the performance of *karma*. Action takes place all the time, everywhere in creation. There is no need to say it ; but the *karma* that is the performance of *svadharma*—not mere action, but acting well and renouncing the fruit—this is easy to say, and appears easy to understand, but it is very difficult to put into practice. For it is considered that the motive force behind any action is the desire for fruit. To act without the desire for fruit is to turn things upside down. It is the very opposite of the way the world proceeds. When a man works unremittingly, we say that the *karma-yoga* of the *Gita* fills his life. We say that the life of a man who works constantly is full of *karma-yoga*, but this is a loose use of language. All this is not *karma-yoga* as explained in the *Gita*. Among millions of people who perform action—not mere action, but even action in the form of *svadharma*—it is difficult to get a few who perform the *karma-yoga* of the *Gita*. A perfect *karma-yogi*—in the true and subtle meaning of the *Gita*—perhaps we shall never find. To perform *karma* and yet to give up its fruit is a most uncommon thing. So far, the *Gita* has been making and maintaining just this distinction.

Another distinction which reinforces this is given in the Thirteenth Chapter. The distinction between body and spirit helps the separation of action from the desire for the fruit. This is set forth in the Thirteenth Chapter. The figure which we see with our eyes, we call an image, a form, a body. But even after seeing with our eyes the outer form, we still have to enter into the object and see it from within. We have to remove the armour, the outer skin, of the fruit and taste the pulp within. Even the coconut one has to break to see what there is within. Despite its rough sharp exterior, the jack-fruit is full of sweet juicy pulp.

Whether we look at ourselves or others, we have to distinguish the inside from the outside. Now, what is the significance of removing the skin ? It means that, in every object, the outer skin and the inner substance should be distinguished. Every object has two forms—an outer body and an inner soul. This is also true of *karma*. The outer result is the body of *karma*. The inner purity that results from *karma* is its soul. Let us give up the body, the outward result of the performance of *svadharma*, and let us bear in our hearts the essence of action, the soul which is inner purity. Let us acquire the habit of looking at things in this way, of seeing everything in its essence, setting aside the body. To the eye, the heart and the mind, we should give the exercise, the training and the habit of such discrimination. In every thing we should leave aside the body and reverence the soul. This distinction has been made in the Thirteenth Chapter, for us to think about.

(68) The fundamentals of growth

The habit of looking for the essence of things is noble indeed. If only we could acquire it from childhood onwards, how good it would be ! This is something that one should make one's own. It appears to many that *adhyatmavidya*, the science of the spirit, has no connection with ordinary

life. Others feel that, even *if such a connection were possible, it is not desirable. If we could arrange to train people from* childhood onwards to *distinguish* between the body and the spirit, it would be a matter for joy. This is a problem in the art of teaching. As a result of faulty education, the minds of children today are filled with evil *samskaras*, wrong tendencies. This education does not carry us beyond the bounds of the feeling, " I am only the body." The activities all relate to the body, and yet the quality that the body should attain, the form that should be given to it, is found nowhere. While thus vain worship is offered to the body, no attention is paid to the joys of the soul. This condition has resulted from the present system of education. Worship is offered day and night to the idol of the body.

From childhood we are taught to worship this deity, the body. If you hurt your foot, it is enough if you apply a little clay to it. The child would be satisfied with this, might feel that even this treatment is unnecessary. He would think nothing of a scratch or an abrasion. But not so his parents and guardians. They would draw the child near and fuss over it, saying, " Oh dear ! How badly you have hurt yourself ! How did it happen ? Where did you fall ? What a deep cut ! Look, it's bleeding ! " Even if the child is not crying, they make him cry. What is one to say of this achievement ? Children are constantly told not to jump about, or play, for fear of falling and getting hurt. They are given a one-sided education which teaches them to think only of the body.

Even when we praise or blame the child, it is in reference to the body. We say, " How dirty you are ! " How it hurts the child, and how false is this identification of the child with the body ! It is true that there is dirt and it is true that it needs to be washed off. But instead of casually washing off the dirt from the body, why attack the child ?

He cannot bear it. He becomes thoroughly miserable. While his heart, his inner self, is all purity and cleanliness, why this wrong attribution of dirt ? In reality, the child is far from dirty. The child is the Lord Himself, absolute in his beauty, sweetness, holiness and love. In the child too He is manifest ; but we call the child dirty ! What is this connection between him and dirt ? Since the child does not understand this at all, he cannot bear this attack on him. He is deeply disturbed, and such disturbance stands in the way of improvement. Hence we should explain things clearly to him and keep him clean and tidy.

Instead of this, we impress on the child's mind the idea that he is the body. There is an important principle in the art of teaching that we should recognise. The teacher should have the *bhavana*, the attitude, that the child is beautiful in every way. If the pupil gives a wrong answer, he is slapped. What is the connection between the slap and the error ? If he comes late to school, a blow descends on him. The blood rushes up to his face, but will that make him come earlier to school ? Can this swifter flow of blood tell him what the time is ? To tell the truth, by such treatment, we only strengthen the animal in him. We confirm the *bhavana* that he is the body. We build his life on the foundation of fear. If we really want him to improve, we cannot do so by the use of force, which only heightens the body sense. One improves only when one realises, " I am different from the body."

There is no harm in being aware of one's defects either of the body or the mind. The awareness helps one to remove these defects. But one must understand clearly that one is not the body. ' I ' am altogether distinct from the body, separate, entirely beautiful, bright, holy, free of imperfection. When a man examines himself to remove his imperfections, he makes a distinction between himself and the body. So

when others draw his attention to the imperfections in him, he does not lose his temper. Instead, he considers carefully the faults in the mechanism of his body or mind and tries to set them right. On the contrary, a person who does not make this distinction between the body and himself cannot improve himself at all. "This body, this lump of flesh, this image of clay, this is me"—if a man thinks thus, how could he improve himself ? Improvement becomes possible only when we begin to realise that the body is given to us as a means, an instrument. When someone points out that something is wrong with my *charkha*, do I get angry ? On the contrary, any fault found in it, I set right. The body too is exactly like this. The body is a tool with which to cultivate the field of the Lord. If it gets out of order, it should of course be set right forthwith. The body being an instrument, we should keep ourselves distinct from it, and try to get rid of defects in it. I am separate from this instrument. I am its master and owner, I make it work and receive its noble service. From childhood onwards, we should cultivate this attitude of remaining separate from the body.

As the spectator who stands aloof from the game sees most clearly its merits and defects, it is only when we stand aloof from the body, mind and intellect that we can observe the merits and defects in them. Some people say, "My memory is getting feeble. Please tell me what do to about it." When a man says this, it is clear that he looks on himself as different from his memory. He says, "My memory has become dull," as he might say of any other of his instruments, that it has lost its quality. One may mislay one's child, one may mislay one's book, but one cannot mislay oneself. When at the end he dies, the body is utterly lost and turns to nothing, but he himself remains the same. He is whole, and free from all disease. This is a thing to understand. Once we understand this, we are released from many conflicts and difficulties.

(69) Attachment to the body obstructs living

As a result of the widespread assumption that the body is oneself, man has thoughtlessly constructed for himself a large variety of means for cherishing the body. The very sight of them is terrifying. Man's constant concern is that the body is getting old ; it is becoming thin and dry ; and yet it must by some means be perpetuated. But, after all, how long can you keep alive this body, this outer skin ? It is only till death, isn't it ? When the fell sergeant Death presents his warrant, can the body resist it for a moment ? In the presence of Death, all one's pride freezes. And yet, for the sake of this frail body, man accumulates innumerable means of support. Day and night, he is anxious about his body. Nowadays, they say that there is no harm in eating meat to preserve the body. The human body, then, is so precious that we should eat meat to preserve it. They say that the animal's body is less precious. Why ? Why is the human body so precious ? What is the reason ? Can it be that the animal eats what it likes, that it has no idea beyond satisfaction of needs ? Man does not act like this. Man takes care of the creatures around him. That is why the human body has value, that is why it is precious. But by eating meat we destroy that which makes the human body precious. My good man, your greatness depends, does it not, on the fact that you live with self-control, that you labour for the safety of all beings, that you care for them and cherish them ? Is it not because of this quality in you, which is not found in animals, that man is considered nobler ? That is why it is said that human birth is difficult to attain. But if we destroy the foundation of man's greatness and nobility, how can the superstructure remain ? If man too, without shrinking, behaves like any other animal and lives on flesh, it would be like cutting off from the tree the branch on which one sits.

Medical science is performing many miracles today. Into the body of a living animal they inject disease germs and watch its effects. The knowledge gained by giving all this pain to a living creature is used for the sake of the worthless human body. And all this goes on in the name of " compassion to creatures." Producing disease germs in the animal's body, we take out the serum for injecting into the human body. Many such terrible actions are being done. This body, for whose sake we do so much, is as brittle as glass and will be shattered to pieces any moment. There is no certainty how long it will last. Though all these efforts are for safeguarding the human body, what do we find in actual experience ? As we go on trying to preserve the delicate human body, it goes on disintegrating. It is not as if we do not understand all this, and yet we keep trying to fatten it and make much of it.

We never consider what kind of food will make the mind *sattvik*, make it bright and clear. What one should do, what aids one should seek to make the mind pure, the intellect clear, we never think. All that we think of is how to increase the weight of our body, how the clay of the earth can be plastered on to this body. Just as cowdung cakes fall off the wall when they are dry, this clay plaster on our body disintegrates, leaving it as it was. What then is the use of adding to the body all this unbearable weight of clay ? Why make the body so fat ? The body is a tool, and we should certainly do all that is necessary to keep it fit. A machine should be made to work, it must be well used. But can one identify oneself with the machine ? And should we not think in the same way of this machine, the body ?

The truth is that the body is not an end, but a means. Once we are confirmed in this attitude, all this fussing over the body will cease. Life will present a different appearance to us. Then we would see no merit in decking the body.

Indeed a piece of ordinary cloth will do to cover it. But no. We want the cloth to be soft and smooth, dyed in beautiful colours, with good patterns and a border. For the sake of this, we make a number of people labour. What is all this for ? Does not the Creator know His job ? If the body needs all these patterns, would He not have spent on your body and mine the skill He has shown on the leopard's skin ? Was it beyond His powers ? He could have fixed to our backs a magnificent tail like the peacock's. But the Lord has made man's skin of a single colour. The slightest spot on it spoils its beauty. Man is beautiful as he is. It is not God's intention that he should be beautified further. Is not Creation extraordinarily beautiful ? All that man has to do is to behold it with his eyes and be content. But he has missed his way. They say that Germany has destroyed our colours. My dear man, the colour of your heart was already dead. It is only then that you developed a taste for these artificial dyes. As a result, you have become dependent on others. You have been needlessly caught in this whirlpool of beautifying the body. Cultivating the mind, developing the intellect, and making the heart beautiful—these have been neglected !

(70) " That thou art "

Therefore the thought that the Lord gives us in the Thirteenth Chapter is most valuable. " You are not the body, you are the Self." "*Tat tvam asi*"—" You are indeed the Self." This thought, this saying, is most noble, pure and holy. This great truth—" You are not this outer covering, the skin, but the true indestructible fruit within "—finds an important place in Sanskrit literature. The moment there arises in the mind of man the thought,—" That are you," " I am not this body, I am the Self Supreme "—a new joy, unknown before, wells up in the heart. These words that spring from the heart are filled with the subtle thought, " Nothing, no one, in the world can destroy this form of mine."

I am the Self, indestructible, flawless, transcending the body. The body has been given to me for the sake of the Self. Whenever there is a chance of the Supreme principle being defiled, I shall, in order to safeguard it, throw away this body. I shall ever be ready to offer up the body in sacrifice in order to keep the flame of the Self brightly burning. Is it to compass my own defeat that I am riding the body ? I must hold sway over the body. I shall put it to good use ; through it I shall increase the welfare and prosperity of the world. " I shall fill the three worlds with joy." For the sake of a great ideal, I shall throw away the body, shouting, " Victory to the Lord." The rich man, when his clothes become a little dirty, throws them away and puts on new ones. I shall treat the body in the same way. It is needed for work. But when it becomes useless for the purpose, why should I hesitate to cast it aside ?

This too is the lesson we learn from satyagraha. The body and the Self are two different things. The day a man discovers this secret, his real education, his real growth begins. It is only then that satyagraha will succeed. Therefore it is necessary for each one of us to impress this *bhavana* on our hearts. The body is only a means, an occasion, an instrument given by the Lord. The day the need for it ceases, it must be thrown away. In summer we put away our warm winter wear ; in the morning we lay aside the blankets we use at night ; we remove in the evening the clothes we wore in the morning. We should regard the body in the same light. As long as the body is useful, we should keep it ; but when it is no more useful, we should fling it aside. The Lord teaches us this device to help the growth of the soul.

(71) An end to tyranny

So long as we do not realise that we are distinct from the body, wicked people will tyrannise over us and enslave us. There is no knowing what injury they will do to us. It is

because of fear that tyranny becomes possible. A *rakshasa* caught hold of a man, and made him work for him ceaselessly. If he paused a little, he threatened him saying, "I shall eat you up. I shall destroy you." At first the man was afraid, but when he could stand it no longer, he said, "All right, eat me up if you want to." But how could the *rakshasa* afford to eat him up ? What he wanted was a servant, a slave. If he were eaten up, who would do the work ? The *rakshasa* was merely threatening. When he got the reply, "All right, eat me up," his power came to an end. Tyrants know that their subjects cling to the body. By inflicting pain on the body, they can enslave and control others. But when you give up attachment to the body, you become an emperor, you achieve freedom. All power comes into your hands. No one can exercise authority over you. The very basis of tyranny breaks down. For the basis of tyranny is the *bhavana*, "I am the body." Knowing that through suffering inflicted on the body they can tyrannise over others, they use threatening language.

"I am the body"—this *bhavana* of mine arouses in others the desire to tyrannise, to inflict pain. But what did the great English martyr Cranmer say ? "If you would burn me, by all means, do. Here, burn this right hand first, for this hand hath offended." In the same way, Latimer said, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as (I trust) shall never be put out." Who could burn such men ? They lit a fire of *dharma* which no one can put out. Their task was to burn this candle of the body and spread everywhere the light of truth. Socrates was sentenced to death by poison. He said then, "I am old. This body is due to be destroyed in a short while. What valour do you show by destroying that which is about to perish ? Consider, some day the body has to die. Where is the credit in killing

that which is mortal ?" The night before he was to drink hemlock and die, he taught his pupils about the immortality of the soul. He described with zest the effects the poison would have on the body. He did not shrink from it in the least. As soon as he finished speaking of the immortality of the soul, one of his pupils asked him, " What rites would you like us to perform when you are no more ?" He replied, " How wonderful ! They will kill me and you will bury me ! Those who kill me are my enemies, and you who bury me are my great friends ! They kill me cleverly and you bury me cleverly ! Who are you to bury me ? I am as clever as you. Where will you bury me ? In the earth or in a tomb ? No one can kill me, and no one can bury me. Has all my teaching been in vain ? The Self is immortal. Who can kill it, who can bury it ? " And, indeed, for twenty-five centuries, this great man Socrates has been standing aloft, watching everyone else being buried !

(72) Faith in the power of the Supreme Self

No true safety is possible so long as there is attachment to the body and consequent fear. There is only a sense of insecurity. When one shuts one's eyes, there is a fear that a snake might bite one or robbers might attack. One sleeps with a stick by one's side. If you ask why, you are told, " It is good to have it there, a thief might turn up." My dear man, what if the thief takes up that stick and hits you on your head ? It is as if you are keeping a stick ready in case the thief forgets to bring one. What gives you the courage to go to sleep ? At this moment you are in the hands of the world. It is only when you are awake that you can protect yourself. Who guards you when you sleep ?

I go to sleep trusting to some power. I sleep trusting to the same power that protects the tiger and the cow when they sleep. Even the tiger goes to sleep. Even the tiger, which being at enmity with the world is constantly looking back,

goes to sleep. If it had no faith in that power, it would be necessary to make an arrangement for some tigers to keep watch while others sleep. The power trusting to which the lion and the tiger and the wolf go to sleep, that power pervades all creation, and in its lap, I too am asleep. The child sleeps, free from care, in its mother's lap. He is then the emperor of the world. You and I should train ourselves to sleep in the lap of the universal mother in love and trust and knowledge. I should become better acquainted with the power by which all my life proceeds. I should understand it more and more clearly. The more I trust to it, the more secure I will be. The more I experience this power, the more I grow. In the Thirteenth Chapter, something is shown of the steps of this progress.

(73) Progressive realisation of the Supreme Self

So long as the thought of the Self within the body does not arise, man is absorbed in ordinary activities. When hungry he eats, when thirsty he drinks, when drowsy he falls off to sleep—he knows nothing beyond these. For these he fights. The thought in his mind is how to get these things. In this way he is immersed in activities relating to the body. Progress begins only later. All this time, the Self remains merely watching. Like a mother watching her baby crawling near the well, with the same care the Self watches us. Quietly, it watches all these activities. This is called the stage of the "*upadrashtaa,*" the witness watching.

In this state, the Self watches without assenting. But the *jiva*, the soul, which till now acted in all things identifying itself with the body, wakes up. The knowledge suddenly dawns upon it that it has been living like an animal. When the soul begins to think like this, the foundations of ethics are laid. It examines every issue asking, "Is it right ? Is it wrong ?" It starts exercising the power of discrimination. The power of analysis develops. It stops acting merely on

selfish impulse. Discipline takes the place of self-indulgence. When the soul thus enters the domain of ethics, the Self does not merely stand aside and watch. It expresses approval from within, saying, "Well done!" Now it ceases to be merely an "*upadrashtaa*," a witness, and becomes an "*anumantaa*," one who assents and approves.

A hungry man comes to your door when you have just sat down to eat. You give the food away to him. When, late at night, what you did comes back to mind, you hear the still small voice of the Self saying, "You have done well." When the mother pats her child on the back and says, "Well done, my child!" he has the feeling that he has gained the whole world. Even so, the approving voice of the Self within fills us with joy and strength. Now the soul has left the path of pleasure and planted its feet firmly on the path of right conduct.

Then we come to the next stage. Through doing his duty, man tries to cleanse his mind and heart. But as he does this, a point is reached when he gets tired. Then the soul begins to pray, "Oh Lord! I have come to the end of my efforts. Give me more strength, more power." Until a man realises that he cannot achieve success by his own efforts, however hard, he cannot understand the secret of prayer. When he has put all his strength into his efforts and finds them inadequate, he should call on the Supreme with a sad and yearning heart; as Draupadi did. The stream of the Lord's compassion and succour flows ceaselessly. Whoever is thirsty can drink of it as of right; whoever has need, can seek fulfilment there. This is the relationship in the third stage. The Supreme now comes very close. He comes running now to help and does not merely offer words of praise.

At first, the Lord stood at a distance. As the teacher, giving his pupil a question to answer, stands aside and watches, so too, as long as the soul adheres to the life of pleasure,

the Supreme stands aloof and says "All right, play your pranks." Then the *jiva* enters the sphere of ethics. Now the Supreme can remain neutral no longer. When he sees that good things are happening through the *jiva*, the Lord looks in and says, "Well done !" When through such good actions the grosser faults of the mind are removed, and the time comes for cleansing the subtle impurities, the man finds all his efforts are inadequate, he calls on the Lord for help. Then He answers the call and comes running. Whenever the *bhakta's* strength declines, He comes and stands before him. *Suryanarayana* (the Lord in the form of the sun), the sergeant of the whole world, is ever standing at your door. He will not break open a closed door and enter, for he is a servant. He gives the respect due to the master. He will not knock. The master sleeps within, and so the servant sun stands waiting outside. But let the door be opened ever so little, he will enter with all his brightness and drive away the darkness. The Lord is just like that. If you seek His help, He will come with arms outstretched. On the banks of the river Bhima in Pandharpur, He stands ready with His stands on His hips. Tukaram and others describe Vitthal as ready to save, with arms outstretched. Through the open nostril, the air rushes in. Through the open door, the light comes flooding in. But even this comparison with air and light is not good enough. The Lord is nearer to us than they. He is more eager to help us. He is the *upadrashtaa*, the witness, and the *anumantaa*, the one who assents, but He is also, in every way, the *bhartaa*, the support. When we are unable to purify the mind, and cry helplessly, "My life is in your hands, Oh Lord ; save me !" or pray, "You are my sole helper, I need your support," how can He, who is all compassion, stand aside ? The Lord, the helper of the devotee, He who makes perfect all that is incomplete, comes running to us. Then He washes hides for Raidas, sells meat for the butcher Sajan, weaves cloth for Kabir, and grinds at the stone with Janabai.

The next stage is to dedicate to the Lord even the fruit of action, which we receive by His grace. At this stage, the *jiva* says to the Lord. "The fruit is yours. Enjoy it." Namadev sat down obstinately insisting, "Lord, you have to drink this milk." What a lovely situation! The milk which is the result of all actions, he dedicates to the Lord! In this way, all the earnings and savings of his life, he dedicates to the Lord, to whose grace he owes them. When Dharmaputra was about to set foot in heaven, the dog that was with him was not allowed to enter. Then Dharmaputra renounced in one instant all the merits he had accumulated in a lifetime —the right to heaven. In the same way, the *bhakta* gives over to the Lord all the fruits of action. The Lord who was *upadrashtaa*, *anumantaa*, *bhartaa*, has now become the *bhoktaa*, the enjoyer. The *jiva* has now reached the state when, through this body, the Lord enjoys pleasure.

Hereafter, one must give up making *samkalpa*, forming resolutions. There are three stages in action. First we make a resolve, then we act, and finally the fruit comes to us. The fruit that through the grace of the Lord came from the action, even that has been given over to the Lord. He who does the action is the Lord. He who tastes the fruit is the Lord. Now, let the resolve too be made by the Lord. In this way let the beginning, the middle and the end of action be filled with the Lord. Jnanadev says, "The water flows without speaking back wherever the gardener turns it. Let us be like this water always." The water nourishes the flower plant or the fruit tree at the bidding of the gardener. In the same way, let the Lord decide what action should take place through my hands. Let me entrust to Him the responsibility for all the resolves of my mind. When I have put all my weight on the horse, why carry a few things on my head? Why not put them too on the horse's back? Even if I carry them on my head, does not the horse that carries me carry that burden

too ? Why not then put all the weight straight on the horse's back ? In this way, all the agitations, the dance and play of life, all the growth, become in the end the Lord's own. He becomes indeed the *mahesvara,* the Great Lord, of my life. Growing in this way, all one's life is filled with God. Only the curtain of the body remains. When that is removed, *jiva* and *Siva,* the soul and the Supreme Self, become one. Thus,

" *Upadrashtaa anumantaa cha bhartaa bhoktaa mahesvarah*

" The Lord is the witness, the assentor, the support, the enjoyer."

Thus progressively we should learn to experience the Lord. At first the Lord watches as an impartial witness. Then when the life of morality begins, He encourages us when good things take place through us. When the devotee discovers that his own efforts are inadequate to cleanse the subtler impurities of the mind, and calls on him, this helper of the helpless rushes to his aid. After this, we have to give over to the Lord the fruits of action, and make Him the enjoyer. And, in the end, we should surrender to Him the right to resolve and thus fill all our life with Him. This is the ultimate goal of man, which the *sadhaka,* the seeker, has to reach, flying on the twin wings of *karma-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga,* of action and devotion.

(74) Humility, absence of pride and other basic means to jnana

To achieve all this, the firm foundation of the practice of morality is indispensable. We should discriminate between truth and falsehood, and follow only truth. We should distinguish between the essential and the accidental and hold fast to the essential. We should throw away the shell and keep the pearl. In this way we should begin life. Then with the help of one's own efforts and the grace of God, one should make further progress. If throughout this process we practise discrimination between the body and

Self, it would be a help. At such times I call to mind the sacrifice of Jesus. They were hammering nails into His body. It is said that then the words came out of His mouth, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But soon Lord Jesus collected Himself and said, "Thy will be done. Lord, forgive them for they know not what they do." There is a great secret in this. This shows clearly how far the Self should be separated from the body. What the goal should be, and how near to it we can get, we can learn from the life of Jesus. We reach the point where we see the body being peeled off like armour, like the skin of a fruit. Whenever I think of how the spirit should be distinguished from the body, the life of Jesus and this final scene appear before my eyes. How to be quite other than the body, how to sever the link with it, this the life of Christ shows us clearly.

Until we acquire the power to discriminate between truth and falsehood, it is not possible to distinguish between the body and the Self. This discrimination, this knowledge, should pervade every fibre of our being. The word "*jnana*," we take to mean "to know." But to know with the mind is not *jnana*, true knowledge. To stuff one's mouth with food is not the same as eating. The food in the mouth should be masticated, passed through the gullet into the stomach, digested, converted into blood, and circulated throughout the body to nourish it. Only then will it become real food. In the same way, mere knowledge of the mind is unavailing. That knowledge should pervade all one's life and flow through one's heart. It should express itself through the hands and the feet, the eyes and every other member. One should attain a state when all the organs of perception and action work from knowledge. Therefore, in the Thirteenth Chapter, the Lord has given a beautiful description of *jnana*. The marks of this *jnana* are like those of the *sthitaprajna*—humility, freedom from pride, *ahimsa*, straightness, tolerance. Twenty

such qualities, the Lord enumerates. He does not merely say that these qualities are called *jnana*, he says clearly that their opposites are *ajnana*. The means to *jnana* are themselves *jnana*. Socrates regarded good qualities as themselves *jnana*. The means and the end are identical.

These twenty means mentioned in the *Gita*, Jnanadev makes into eighteen. These are described in the *Gita* in five slokas ; but Jnanadev in his *Jnaneswari* describes them lovingly in 700 *ovis* (verses). He was eager that these good qualities should spread through society, that the power of the Lord who is Truth should prevail. He has put all his experience into the description of these qualities. This has been of inestimable help to the Marathi-speaking people. These qualities pervaded Jnanadev's life. A blow that fell on a buffalo caused a swelling on Jnanadev's back. He had such fellow-feeling for all creatures. It is out of this compassionate heart of Jnanadev that the *Jnaneswari*, his commentary on the *Gita*, emerged. He has analysed these qualities thoroughly. We should read his description of these qualities, meditate on them, and receive them into our hearts. I consider myself fortunate in being able to enjoy this in Jnanadev's sweet language. I shall deem it my good fortune to be born again if my tongue can utter this sweet language of his. The substance is that we should make our lives grow more and more by distinguishing the body from the spirit and trying to fill our being with God.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GUNAS—BUILDING UP AND BREAKING DOWN

(75) Analysis of nature

Brothers, this Fourteenth Chapter in one sense completes the Thirteenth. As a matter of fact, the Self has no need to do anything. It is complete in itself. The natural movement of one's soul is upwards. But just as any object is dragged down when a heavy weight is tied to it, the burden of the body drags down the soul. We saw in the last Chapter that, if by some means we could separate body and soul, we shall progress. This may be very difficult, but the results too are great. If we could only snap the fetters of the body that bind the feet of the soul, we shall experience a great joy. Then we shall not be miserable because of the body's sufferings. We shall become free. If a man achieves victory over this body, who in the world can exercise power over him ? He who rules himself rules over the whole world. Therefore, remove the domination of the body over the soul. The pleasures and pains of the body are all alien and do not belong to us. Between them and the Self there is not the slightest connection.

To what extent we should keep all these pains and pleasures distinct from ourselves, I illustrated from the story of Jesus. He has shown us that, even when the body is breaking, the mind can be kept in peace and joy. But this separation of the body from the Self is the result not only of discrimination, but of self-control. Tukaram speaks of the strength of *vairagya* (non-attachment) in association with *viveka* (discrimination). Both are necessary. *Vairagya*, non-attachment, is itself a kind of self-control or renunciation. The Fourteenth Chapter describes the directions in which we should exercise self-control. The oars propel the boat, but the rudder guides it. The oars and the rudder are both

needed. In the same way, for separating the Self from the pains and pleasures of the body, both discrimination and self-control are needed.

Just as the physician examines the patient's body and prescribes medicine, the Lord in the Fourteenth Chapter examines and analyses the whole of nature and diagnoses its maladies. Here nature has been neatly classified. There is a principle of division in statecraft. If you can divide the forces of the enemy in front of you, you can readily gain victory. The Lord does the same here.

In you and me, in all beings, in all things moving and unmoving, nature is made up of three strands. Just as there are three things in *ayurveda*, *kapha* (phlegm), *pitta* (bile) and *vata* (wind), nature is made up of the three *gunas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. All space is filled with a mixture of these three. A little more here and a little less there, that's all the difference. If we separate the Self from these three, we can separate it from the body. To examine and conquer these three *gunas*, is itself the way of separating the Self from the body. Through self-control one should conquer these, one by one, until one approaches in the end the most important thing, that which is beyond the *gunas*.

(76) The cure for tamas—bodily labour

Let us take *tamas* first. In the condition of modern society, we see terrible manifestations of *tamas*. Its chief manifestation is laziness. From this spring sleep and neglectfulness. Laziness, sleep and neglectfulness, if we have overcome these, we may take it that we have conquered *tamas*. The most terrible of these is laziness. The best of men may be ruined by it. It is an enemy which will destroy all the peace and happiness of society. It corrupts everyone, from the lowest to the highest. It spares no one. It lies in wait to pounce upon us. At the slightest opportunity it comes and settles within us. A little more food than usual, and it drives us

to our beds. If we sleep a little too much, our eyes are dull with sloth. As long as we have not overcome this laziness, all our efforts are in vain. But then we look eagerly forward to laziness. Our desire is that we should work day and night for a while, and save up some money so that we may spend the rest of our lives in leisure. The purpose of earning a lot of money is to prepare for a life of laziness later. We generally believe that leisure is necessary in old age. But this is a mistake. If we lead our life in the right way, we should be working even in old age. With increasing experience, our usefulness should also increase. Is that the time to seek rest ?

We must take good care that laziness has no chance. King Nala was a great man. And yet they say that when he washed his feet he left a little spot dry, and Kali (the evil spirit) entered through it. King Nala was absolutely pure, clean in every way, but he left a tiny part of his foot unwashed. And because of this touch of laziness, Kali entered into him. But we expose the whole body. Laziness can enter in anywhere it likes. When the body is lazy, the mind and intellect are lazy too. Society today is built on this laziness. A great deal of misery has arisen from this. If we could cure this laziness, much, if not the whole, of this misery could be removed.

At present, everywhere, there is talk of social reform. We are constantly disucssing the minimum comfort the common man should have, and the structure of society necessary to bring this about. On the one hand there is excessive comfort, and on the other absolute privation. On the one side wealth is piled up and for the rest there is a bottomless depth of poverty. How can we remove these vast inequalities in society ? There is only one natural way for every one to get the necessaries of life ; and that is for every one to shake off laziness and work hard. Most of our misery arises from laziness. If all were to resolve to work with their bodies, this misery will be no more.

But what do we see in society today ? On one side, men grown rusty and useless ; the limbs and senses of the rich are eaten up with rust because they are never used. On the other side are bodies worn thin by unremitting toil. But the tendency in society is for everybody to try and escape from bodily labour. Even those who work hard do so without cheer. They do so because there is no help for it. Those who are educated and intelligent make all sorts of excuses for avoiding labour. Some say, " Why waste time in bodily labour ? " But no one asks, " Why waste time sleeping and eating ? " When we are hungry we eat. When we are sleepy we sleep. But when the question of bodily labour arises, we ask, " Why waste our time ? Why give so much trouble to the body ? We are doing enough work, are we not, with our minds ?" My dear Sir, you talk of working with the mind? Then, why not eat with the mind and sleep with the mind ? Why not be content with " mental " sleep and " mental " food ?

Thus there are two classes of men in society—those who work day and night and kill themselves, and those who do not lift a little finger. A friend of mine once said to me, " Some are heads and some are trunks. On the one hand, we have headless bodies, and on the other, bodiless heads. The trunks merely labour, while the heads merely think. Society has come to consist of Rahus and Ketus, who never meet." But if in reality they were separate heads and trunks, it would not matter. For then some mutual arrangement could be made, as in the story of the blind man and the lame man. The lame could lead the blind and the blind carry the lame. But the heads and the trunks do not really form different groups. Everybody has both a head and a trunk. This combination of head and trunk is found everywhere. What then shall we do ? Every one must shake off laziness.

And to shake off laziness one must perform bodily labour ; this is the only way to conquer laziness. If we fail to do this, we cannot but receive due punishment from Nature. We have to endure it in the form of sickness and other miseries. Since we have the body, we must use it for labour. The time spent on such labour is not wasted. It does yield results, We have sound health ; our minds become bright and keen and pure. In the ideas of many thinkers we see reflected their colics and head-aches. If these thinkers would work under the sun, in the open air, in the presence of Nature, their ideas would be strong and bright. Experience shows that just as the mind is influenced by bodily sickness, so it is by bodily health. Instead of contracting tuberculosis and then going to Bhuwali and other health resorts in the mountains in search of sunlight and pure air, why not dig with a spade in the open, or water the garden, or hew wood with an axe, and keep healthy ?

(77) Another cure for tamas

The first thing is to conquer laziness ; the second is to conquer sleep. Sleep is in reality something holy. The slumber of the saints who fall asleep, who work till they tire themselves out, is in itself a kind of *yoga*. Such deep and peaceful sleep comes only to the fortunate. Sleep must be deep and peaceful and undisturbed. The value of sleep does not consist in its duration. Sleep does not depend on the length of the bed or the period during which the person lay on it. The deeper the well, the sweeter and purer its water. So too, though one may aleep for a short while, if it is deep, it does good. It is better to study with concentration for half an hour than to look at a book for three hours with a wandering mind. Sleep too is like that. It cannot be said that long sleep is always beneficial. The sick man lies on his bed all the twenty-four hours of the day. Though he clings to the bed, sleep does not approach him. Only deep

dreamless sleep is true sleep. Whatever the tortures of Yama after death may be, the tortures of one who cannot sleep and is troubled by dreams are certainly indescribable. In the *Veda*, the *rishi* in his fear prays,

" *paraa duhsvapnyam suva* "

" I do not want, I do not want this terrible sleep." Sleep is meant to give rest, but if even in sleep all kinds of dreams and cares trouble us, where are we to find rest ?

How then are we to get deep, undisturbed sleep ? The means to shake off laziness will serve here too. We should give ceaseless work to the body. Then the moment we get into bed, we shall sleep like a corpse. Indeed sleep is a brief death. To attain this beautiful death we should make due preparation by day. The body must be thoroughly tired out by toil. The English poet Shakespeare says, " Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." One reason for it is that a king does not work with his body. He who drowses by day will have to keep vigil at night. Not to use the mind and body by day, what is this but drowsing ? Later, when it is time for sleep, the mind is troubled by thoughts, and the body misses the pleasure of real sleep. Then he sleeps late. If this life which should be used for attaining the highest ends is consumed by sleep, when and how can we ever reach those ends ? If half of our life is spent in sleep, what good then do we get out of life ?

When much time is consumed in sleep, the third defect of *tamas* arises, namely, negligence and error. The mind of the drowsy man cannot be strong or vigilant. From this comes inattention. Too much sleep leads to laziness and laziness to forgetfulness. Forgetfulness is an enemy of the spirit. Even in worldly affairs, forgetfulness causes nothing but harm. But in our society, forgetfulness is regarded as quite natural. No one thinks it is a great fault. We make an appointment with somebody, and we don't go on time. When asked,

we say " Good Lord, I forgot !" Both the speaker and the hearer are satisfied with this explanation. It looks as though people think there is no remedy for forgetfulness. But this forgetfulness does harm in practical as well as in spiritual matters. It is in truth a grave sickness. The canker consumes the mind and our life becomes hollow.

The laziness of the mind is the cause of forgetfulness. If the mind is alert, it cannot become forgetful. The recumbent mind cannot save itself from the disease of forgetfulness. Hence the Lord Buddha says,

" *pamaado macchuno padam.*"

Negligence, forgetfulness, is death itself. To get rid of this forgetfulness, we should conquer laziness and sloth. Work with your body. Be always alert. Let every action proceed from deep thought. Nothing should ever be done without thinking. Think before you act and think also after you act. Before and after action, everywhere, the Lord in the form of thought should stand beside us. If we acquire this habit, the disease of inattention will leave us. All our time should thus be regulated in the right way. If we keep an account of every moment, laziness cannot break into our life. It is in this way that we should try to conquer *tamas.*

(78) The cure for rajas—Living within the limits of svadharma

After dealing with *tamas*, we should come to grips with *rajas*. *Rajas* too is a terrible foe. This is only another aspect of *tamas* ; it would be true to say that both these words stand for the same thing. After long sleep the body is restless, and after much movement it longs to stretch itself on the bed. From *tamas* proceeds *rajas*, and from *rajas*, *tamas*. Where one is present, you may take it that the other will be found too. Like bread in the oven with the flames below and the embers above, man is caught between *rajas* and *tamas*. *Rajas* says, " Come here, I shall toss you towards *tamas*" and *tamas* says, " Come here, I shall throw you to *rajas*."

Thus *rajas* and *tamas* help each other to ruin man. Just as the football is destined to get kicked about on all sides, man's life is spent in receiving the kicks of *rajas* and *tamas*.

The chief mark of *rajas* is the desire to do all sorts of things, an overweening ambition to do superhuman deeds. Through *rajas* we conceive a limitless desire for action, a consuming greed. Then we become unable to control the eagerness of our instincts and passions. We wish to remove the mountain here and fill up the lake there. We are impelled to drain the water from the sea and to submerge the deserts of the Sahara. We think of digging a Suez Canal or Panama Canal. We are never at peace unless we are breaking and mending. This is just like a child cutting up a piece of paper and making it into something else. Mixing this with that, drowning one thing in another, making something fly, changing one thing into another—these are the endless games played by *rajas*. "The bird flies in the air. Why should I not fly too ? The fish lives in the water. Why should I not make a submarine and live in water too ?"—thus, having got a human body, we find satisfaction in competing with birds and fish. Man wants to migrate to other bodies and experience their wonders. Someone says, "Come, let us go to Mars and see how people live there." The mind wanders all the time, as if innumerable desires, like so many demons, possessed it. We cannot bear to see things being where they are. We need some commotion, some excitement. We think, "When, with all my greatness, I am here, how could creation remain what it has always been ?" We behave like a wrestler who, through excess of energy, dashes against a wall and kicks against a tree. Such excitement springs from *rajas*. Under its influence man burrows deep into the earth, brings out from its bowels a few stones and calls them rubies and diamonds. Possessed by the same agitation, he dives into the sea and, bringing up the rubbish from the depths, calls it a pearl. But because

it has no hole, he pierces one through it. Now, where is it to be worn ? So he gets the goldsmith to pierce his nose and ears for him. Why does man fuss about in this fashion ? All this is due to the power of *rajas*.

Another effect of *rajas* is absence of steadiness. *Rajas* desires immediate results. When a slight obstruction is met with, the man gives up the path he has chosen and takes to another. The man of *rajas* is ever busy taking up and abandoning things. He changes his mind every day. And in the end he finds himself empty-handed.

raajasam chalam adhruvam.

All the acts of the man of *rajas* are restless and uncertain. He is like the child who plants a seed and, a little later, digs it up again to see if it has sprouted. He expects results then and there. He has neither confidence nor equanimity. He does not know how to plant his feet firmly. He does some work here ; he gets some fame there ; then he goes off to a third place which is neither here nor there. Today a reception in Madras, tomorrow in Calcutta, and the day after in Bombay or Nagpur. His ambition is to get civic addresses from every municipality in the land. He sees glory everywhere. But staying in a place and doing some steady work, that is not his way. The state of the *rajasik* man is thus really terrible.

Under the influence of *rajas*, man indulges in all sorts of activities. For him, there is nothing like *svadharma*. The true pursuit of *svadharma* means the giving up of other varied activities. The *karma-yoga* of the *Gita* is the *Rama-bana*, the arrow of Rama, for the destruction of *rajas*. Everything about *rajas* is restless, unsteady. If the rain falling on a mountain-top runs in all directions, it disappears, leaving no trace behind ; the water is scattered and wasted. But when the same water flows in one direction, it becomes a river. A power springs from it. It brings blessings to the

land. So too, if a man does not scatter his energies in all sorts of efforts, but collects them and applies them in orderly fashion to a single task, only then can some good action take shape through his hands. Hence there is great value in *svadharma.*

We should think constantly of our *svadharma* and devote all our energies to it ; we should have no thought for anything else. This is the touchstone of *svadharma. Karma-yoga* is not action which is great or weighty. The *karma-yoga* of the *Gita* is something quite different. Its distinctive virtue consists in progressively acquiring *chittasuddhi*, inner purity, through performing, without any thought of fruit, the *svadharma* that comes to one naturally and inescapably. Endless activities go on all the time throughout creation. But *karma-yoga* means performing all actions with a special mental attitude. To sow seed in a field and to scatter a handful of grain somewhere—these are entirely distinct actions. The difference between them is great ; we know how much we gain by sowing the seed and what we lose by throwing it away. The *karma* that the *Gita* teaches is like the sowing of seed. There is an unlimited power in carrying out one's duty, one's *svadharma*. Here, no effort can be too great. Here, there is no excuse for running around.

(79) How to determine one's svadharma

" How then, is *svadharma* to be determined ? " If someone asks this, the easy answer would be, " It comes naturally, of itself." It is born into the world with us. The very idea of going in search of it is strange. When a man is born, his *svadharma* too is born with him. As a child has no need to go in search of his mother, no one need go in search of *svadharma.* It is ours, right from the beginning. The world was there before we were born ; it will be there when we are no more. The mighty stream flowed before we were born into it and it will flow after we are gone. The service of the

parents to whom I was born, the service of the neighbours amongst whom I find myself, these duties come to me naturally. Then, my other obligations are matters of everyday experience. I feel hungry, I feel thirsty. So, to give food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty becomes my duty by nature. Hence, it is never necessary to go in search of *svadharma*, of some form of service or compassion. Wherever there is a search for *svadharma*, one may be certain that some *paradharma* or *adharma* is going on, that some one else's duty or some wrong action is being performed.

The servant need not go in search of service ; it comes to him unsought. But one thing he should remember ; that is, that everything that comes to him without an effort on his part is not necessarily right. A farmer comes to me at night and says, " Come, let us shift that bund a few feet away. That will make my field larger. There is no one there now. We can do it unnoticed." Although this task is assigned to me by my neighbour and comes of its own accord, it is not to be regarded as my duty, for it harbours *asatya*, falsehood.

The reason why I like the system of the four *varnas* is that both naturalness and *dharma* are found in it. If you give up *svadharma*, nothing will be gained. Only those who happen to be my parents will be my parents. I may say that I do not like them, but then, what can be done about it ? The parent's calling is naturally followed by the son. It is the distinguishing feature of the *varna* system that the trade pursued by one's ancestors—if it is not opposed to morality—should be continued and developed. This system has now fallen into decay. Today it has become very difficult to uphold it. But it would be an excellent thing if only we could reform and revive it. Today the first 25 or 30 years of a man's life are spent in learning a new job, a new trade. After learning it, the man goes in search of a place to serve in, to work in. Thus

between what he learns in the first 25 years and his actual life there is no connection. They say that he is preparing for his later life. This amounts to saying that while he is learning he is not alive. Apparently, life is to come later ! One is to learn everything first and begin to live afterwards, as if living and learning are two entirely different things ! But if this is not related to life, should we not call it death ? While the average Indian's expectation of life is 23 years, here we are, spending 25 years in just preparing for living. In this way a lifetime is spent in learning a trade. Then the actual practice of the trade begins. In the result, the most energetic and enthusiastic years of our life are wasted. The energy and enthusiasm which should be used in the service of mankind and enrichment of life run to waste. Life is not mere play. But it makes one sad to think that the first and most valuable part of life is spent in searching for a means of livelihood. It is for this reason that Hinduism has discovered for us the system of *varna*.

Let us leave aside the system of the four *varnas*. In every country, even where this system does not obtain, every one has his own *svadharma*. All of us are born into the stream, bringing with us our own special circumstances; the duty called *svadharma* comes into being naturally. We should not therefore adopt distant duties—it is wrong even to call them duties—however noble they may appear. Often, it is distance that lends enchantment to the view. Man is drawn by distant objects. Thick mist may surround a man where he stands. But his eyes do not see it. He points to a distant spot and says, " Look, there is thick mist there." Though there is mist everywhere, we do not see the mist just about us. Distance has an attraction for man. What is by his side lies neglected in a corner and he has dreams of what is far away. But this is a delusion and it must be abandoned. Though the *svadharma* that is mine is commonplace, incomplete

and uninteresting, yet because it is mine, it is the best for me ; it is the most beautiful to me. When a man is drowning in the sea, it is only the log floating near him, however rough and gnarled, that will save him. Does it matter that it is not well-shaped, smooth and polished ? In the carpenter's shed there may be any number of beautiful, well-wrought pieces of wood. But they are in the workshop, while he is struggling for life in the sea. This rough, unshapely log alone can save him. He must catch hold of it.

In the same way, though the duty that falls to me may appear unimportant, it alone serves my purpose. It becomes me to be absorbed in it. In it I find my growth and development. If I wander in search of other service, I shall miss both the old service and the new. Man thus loses the inclination to serve. Therefore, he should remain absorbed in the duty which is *svadharma.*

When we are absorbed in *svadharma*, *rajas* dries up ; for then our mind is one-pointed. Since it does not swerve from *svadharma*, the power of *rajas*, of distraction, slackens. When the river runs deep and still, however much its water rises, it is contained within the banks. So, too, the river of *svadharma* can hold all man's strength and power and energy. No matter how much energy we put into *svadharma*, it can never be too much. If we spend all our energy in *svadharma*, that will be the end of the play of *rajas* ; our unsteadiness will be stamped out. This is the way of conquering *rajas.*

(80) Sattva and how to deal with it

What now remains is *sattva.* We should approach this matter with special care. How to distinguish the Self from *sattva* ? This is a matter for very subtle analysis. We should not altogether destroy *sattva.* While *rajas* and *tamas* must be utterly destroyed, the case of *sattva* is somewhat different. When a big crowd is to be dispersed, the police are ordered to shoot below the knees. The idea is that people are not

to be killed, but wounded. In the same way, *sattva* should be wounded, not killed. When *rajas* and *tamas* have disappeared, what remains is pure *sattva.* So long as we have a body, we have to take our stand on something. Then how long can we stand aloof from the *sattva* which remains after the disappearance of *rajas* and *tamas* ?

When we begin to identify ourselves with *sattva,* it drags down the Self from its nature of pure being. If the light of the lantern is to spread in all its brightness, the carbon deposit inside the glass has to be wiped off ; if there is dust outside, that too should be washed. In the same way, the smoke of *tamas* surrounding the light of the Self should be wiped off. And then the dust of *rajas* should also be removed. At last the transparent glass of *sattva* will remain. Removing *sattva*—does it mean breaking the glass ? No, for the lantern would become useless if the glass is broken. The glass is needed to spread the light. Therefore, we should not break this clean bright glass ; but to save our eyes from the glare, we may insert a piece of paper in front of it. The purpose of this is only to save the eyes from glare. To achieve victory over *sattva* means to remove our identification with it, our attachment to it. We have to make use of *sattva,* but it should be done in a disciplined, intelligent manner. We should make *sattva* free of *ahamkara,* of egoism.

How then are we to overcome the egoism, the pride, of *sattva* ? There is a way for this. And that is to make *sattva* firm and steadfast within us. By being constant in it, we shall cease to be proud of it. We should be constantly doing *sattvik* actions. We should make this part of our nature. We should make *sattva* not a guest who comes and goes, but a member of the household. We get proud of things that we do once in a way. We sleep daily, but we do not discuss it with others. If a patient had no sleep at all for a fortnight and then slept for a while, he tells everybody,

"I had some sleep yesterday." It seems to him quite an event. A better example is our breathing. We breathe all the twenty-four hours of the day, but we do not make much of it. No one boasts of being a breathing animal. If a piece of straw thrown into the Ganga at Haridwar floats down 1500 miles and reaches Calcutta, does it feel proud of its achievement? It was only natural that it should float down with the current. If, however, one swims ten yards against the current, one considers oneself a hero. The truth is that, when an action is natural, we do not feel proud of it.

When some good action gets done through our hands, we are inclined to take the credit for it and feel proud. Why? Because it was not done naturally. When a good action gets done through a child's hands, the mother pats it on the back. Otherwise, the child's back would ordinarily know only the touch of the mother's cane. When in the thick darkness of the night there are a few glow-worms, look how proudly they show themselves off! They do not display all their brightness at once. The glow-worm twinkles and stops and twinkles again, as if it were playing hide and seek with light. But if its light were steady, it would not be so proud. Because it is constant, one notices nothing special in it. If, in the same way, *sattva* shines constantly in all our actions, it would become our nature. Not only is the lion not proud of its strength, it is not even conscious of it. So too, *sattvik* conduct must be so natural and spontaneous with us that we do not even think of it. It is natural for the sun to give light. The sun takes no pride in it. If anybody sets out to present it with a testimonial, it would say, "What is the special thing that I have done? I do no more than give light. My life consists in giving light. If I didn't do that, I would die. What else could I do?" The state of the *sattvik* man should become like this. *Sattva* should pervade every pore of his being. When *sattva* becomes so much our nature, we would cease

to be proud of it. This is one way to make *sattva* harmless, to achieve victory over it.

Another way is to give up even the attachment to *sattva.* Egoism and attachment are two distinct things. But the difference between them is rather fine. One can understand it more readily by means of an illustration. Even when the egoism, the pride in *sattva*, disappears, the attachment to it persists. Take breathing, once more, as an example. Though we are not proud of our breathing, we still have a great desire to breathe. It is impossible to hold the breath even for five minutes. Though the nose is not proud of breathing, it goes on taking in air. There is an amusing story about Socrates. His nose was flat and people used to laugh at it. But the witty philosopher said, " Mine is the most beautiful of noses. These nostrils are wide and take in a lot of air and therefore they are the best." It means that, though the nose is not proud of breathing, it desires to breathe. In the same way we develop an attachment to *sattva-guna.* Take, for example, kindness to all creatures. Though this is a useful quality, we should be able to keep away even from this attachment. We should have kindness, but not attachment to kindness.

It is through this *sattva-guna* that saints show the way clearly to mankind. Because of their compassion, their bodies become the common possession of all. As flies cover the the lump of jaggery, all the world wraps the saint in affection. There is so much love in the heart of the saint that the whole world begins to love him. The saint gives up attachment to his body, and therefore the whole world becomes attached to it and cares for it. But even from this attachment the saint must free himself The world's love, this great fruit,— even from this he should keep the Self separate. He should never feel that he is special or unique. In this way, *sattva-guna* should be digested and disposed of in the body.

Conquer egoism first, and then attachment. Egoism is conquered by constancy in *sattva* ; attachment is conquered by giving up desire for results, and dedicating to the Lord even the fruit attained through *sattva-guna*. When *sattva* becomes steady in our lives, the fruit will come before us, sometimes as success, sometimes as fame. But even this fruit we should regard as something trivial. Not even one of its fruits does the mango tree eat. However good, however sweet, however juicy the mango, not eating it is sweeter than eating it. Renunciation is sweeter than enjoyment. Dharmaraja in the end cast away the joys of *svarga*, heaven, which he had earned by a lifetime's practice of virtue. With this he crowned his life of sacrifice. He had the right to taste the sweetness of the fruit ; but if he had tasted it, it would have come to an end. *Kshiine punye martyalokam visanti*—" When the merits earned are exhausted, they re-enter the world of mortality." He is caught in this wheel again. How great was this sacrifice of Dharmaraja ! It stands for ever before my eyes. Thus by constant practice of *sattva* we should achieve victory over its egoism. Standing aloof, and dedicating all fruits to the Lord, we should free ourselves from attachment to *sattva*. Only then can we say that we have achieved victory over *sattva-guna*.

(81) The Final Stage—Self-realisation and refuge in bhakti

Now to the last matter. Though we become full of *sattva*, though we have vanquished egoism, though we have given up all attachment to fruit, so long as this body lasts we shall be subject now and again to the assaults of *rajas* and *tamas*. We might for a while think that we have overcome these *gunas*, but they come back again and again and exert their power. Therefore we should be ever vigilant. As the waters of the sea rush in and make inroads into the land, the flood of *rajas* and *tamas* enters our minds and eats into them. There should not, therefore, be the smallest chink through which

they can enter. We should keep constant watch. No matter what care and skill we exercise, there is danger, so long as we have not attained Self-realisation, the vision of the Self. Therefore, we should endeavour, no matter by what means, to attain Self-realisation.

Self-realisation will not come from mere vigilance. How then will it come ? Will it come through exercises ? No. There is only one way, and that way is to be devoted to the Lord, to yearn for Him with all one's heart. We may overcome *rajas* and *tamas*, we may become steadfast in *sattva* and give up attachment to its fruit, but this is not enough. The task is not complete till Self-realisation is attained. In the end, therefore, the grace of the Lord is essential. And through real devotion of the heart, we should qualify for the grace of the Lord. I know no other means for this. At the end of this Chapter, Arjuna puts the same question, and the Lord answers, " With mind absolutely one-pointed and without desiring the fruit, be devoted to Me and serve Me. He who serves Me thus crosses *maya*, illusion, and reaches the other shore. It is not easy by any other means to cross this dense *maya*." This is *bhakti's* easy method. And this is the only way.

CHAPTER XV

THE YOGA OF COMPLETENESS—SEEING THE LORD EVERYWHERE

(82) Bhakti is not different from the way of effort

In one sense we have reached the other shore of the *Gita* to-day. In the Fifteenth Chapter all the ideas of the *Gita* find their fulfilment. The Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Chapters are in the nature of supplements, and the Eighteenth Chapter serves as the conclusion. Hence the Lord at the end of this Chapter calls it *sastra*, science. He says,

> " *iti guhyatamam saastram idamuktam mayaa anagha.*"
>
> " Thus, O flawless one, have I taught you this science, the greatest of secrets."

And he says this not because it is the concluding Chapter, but because in it the science and the philosophy of life that have been taught till now find completion. In this Chapter, *paramartha*, the supreme truth, is revealed. The whole essence of the *Vedas* is here. The function of the *Vedas* is to awaken in man the awareness of *paramartha*. Because this is done in this Chapter, it has come to be honoured as " *vedasara*," the essence of the *Veda*.

We saw in the Thirteenth Chapter the need for separating the Self from the body. In the Fourteenth we analysed the efforts necessary for this. Through self-control we should give up *rajas* and *tamas* ; we should develop *sattva* and at the same time overcome attachment to it, renounce the fruit of it. In the end, it is said that, in order to achieve complete success, Self-realisation is essential ; but without *bhakti* Self-realisation is unattainable.

The way of *bhakti*, however, is not different from the way of effort. To show this, at the very beginning of the Fifteenth Chapter, the world is compared to a mighty tree. This tree has great big branches nourished by the three *gunas*. It is

said right at the beginning that this tree is to be cut down with the axe of desirelessness and detachment. It is clear that the discipline described in the previous Chapter is gone over again in the beginning of this. By eliminating *rajas* and *tamas*, and nourishing *sattva*, we should develop ourselves. One is destructive work, the other constructive. Both together form a single path. Removing weeds and sowing seed are two parts of the same job. Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana are three brothers in the *Ramayana*. Kumbhakarna is *tamas*, Ravana is *rajas*, Vibhishana is *sattva*. The *Ramayana* of these three is built into our body. And in this *Ramayana* too, Ravana and Kumbhakarna are destined to destruction. What remains is the Vibhishana-principle. And if it takes refuge in the feet of the Lord, it can give you strength and lead you to the goal. And therefore we should make it our own. This we have understood in the Fourteenth Chapter. But it is repeated in the beginning of the Fifteenth Chapter. By the axe of non-attachment, cut off the world of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Control *rajas* and *tamas*. Develop *sattva* and become pure. Conquer even the attachment to *sattva* and remain free. The *Gita* is here placing before us the ideal of the lotus flower. In India the most noble things of life are compared to the lotus. The lotus is the symbol of our culture. The lotus, though pure and holy, is untouched even by these qualities. Purity and non-attachment are its two-fold power. We compare every part of the Lord's body with the lotus. We speak of His lotus-eyes, lotus-feet, lotus-hand, lotus-face, lotus-navel, lotus-heart and lotus-head, and by this comparison we impress on our hearts the truth that everywhere non-attachment is found only in association with beauty and holiness.

This Chapter is intended to complete the discipline mentioned in the previous Chapter. When in our efforts *bhakti* and awareness of the Self are combined, they become com-

plete. *Bhakti* is only a part of the way of effort. Both Self-realisation and *bhakti* are two halves of the same process. The *rishi* says in the *Vedas* :

" *yo jaagaara tam richah kaamayante*
yo jaagaara tamu saamaani yanti."

" The *Vedas* love him who is awake ; they come of themselves to see him." In other words, to him who is awake comes *Vedanarayana*, the Lord in the form of the *Vedas*, *jnana* comes to him, *bhakti* comes to him. *Jnana* and *bhakti* are not different from the way of effort. It is shown in this Chapter that these two principles make effort sweet. Therefore let us listen with one-pointed mind to this character of *bhakti* and *jnana*.

(83) Through bhakti effort becomes easy

I cannot cut up life into bits. I cannot separate *karma*, *jnana* and *bhakti* ; nor are they separate. For example, look at the cooking in this jail. A few of us do the work of preparing food for the six or seven hundred people here. If some of these cooks do not know their job, they would spoil the food. The *chapatis* would be underdone or burnt black. But let us take it that they have good knowledge of the art of cooking. Even so, if there is no love, no *bhakti*, in their hearts ; if they do not feel, " These *chapatis* are meant for my brothers, for Narayana. They must be well cooked. This is the service of the Lord ; " if they do not feel this, they are unfit for the task in spite of all their knowledge of cooking. Cooking requires not only knowledge, but love too. Unless there is the *rasa* of *bhakti* in the heart, there can be no *rasa*, no taste, in the food. That is why a mother's cooking is particularly tasty. For who else would do this with so much love and care ? And *tapasya*, self-sacrificing austerity, is also necessary for it. How can this work be done without enduring heat and accepting hardship ? From this we conclude that, for success in any action, love, know-

ledge and labour, all three are necessary. All the activities of life stand on these three. If one of the legs of a tripod is broken, it cannot stand ; all three legs are needed. The very name conveys the structure. Such too is the condition of life. *Jnana*, *bhakti*, *karma*, knowledge, love and constant effort, are the three legs on which life stands. On these three pillars we should construct our Dvaraka, the city of nine gates. These three legs together make up one thing. The image of the tripod fits exactly. Even if you logically distinguish between *bhakti*, *jnana* and *karma*, you cannot divide them in experience. The three together make up one great entity.

But it does not follow that there is no special quality in *bhakti*. When the principle of *bhakti* enters into any action, it is only then that it appears easy. " To appear easy " does not mean that there will be no difficulty. It only means that the difficulty will seem not a difficulty, but, on the contrary, a pleasure. Thorns appear as flowers. What is meant by saying that the way of *bhakti* is easy ? It means that, as a result of the attitude of *bhakti*, the burden of action is not felt. The hardship of action disappears. No matter how much work we do, we feel as if we have done no work. Jesus Christ says, " Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance ; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face ; that thou appear not unto men to fast." The idea is, we should be so filled with *bhakti*, so absorbed in it, that we do not feel the hardship.

Do we not say that a patriot walked smiling to the gallows ? Sudhanva smiled in the cauldron of boiling oil, while his lips uttered the names of Krishna, Vishnu, Hari, Govinda. It only means that, because of the power of *bhakti*, one does not feel even the most terrible pain. It is not difficult to

push a boat floating in the water ; but how hard to drag the same boat on land, on rocks ? If there is water under the boat, we can cross over to the other shore without effort. In the same way, if our life's boat floats on the waters of *bhakti*, we can sail gaily in it. But if life is dry and the way dusty, stony, full of pitfalls, it would be indeed hard to drag the boat along. The principle of *bhakti*, like water, makes easy the voyage of our life.

Bhakti makes the path easy, but without Self-knowledge there is no hope of transcending the three *gunas*. Then, what is the means to Self-knowledge ? It is to make *sattva* one's own by constancy in it and to try through *bhakti* to overcome the egoism of *sattva* and attachment to it. If we adopt this means and strive constantly, unremittingly, then the vision of the Self will one day come to us. Till then we cannot come to the end of our efforts. This is a matter concerning the highest goal of our life. Attaining the vision of the Self is not mere play. We cannot expect to find it by the wayside. We should maintain a constant stream of effort. The condition of spiritual life is the resolve, " I shall never give the slightest room to despair. I shall never—not even for a moment—sit still in despondency." There is no other means of spiritual progress. The seeker sometimes asks in weariness,

> " For your sake I have practised *tapas* and self-control.
> Tell me what more I should do, and how much longer
> I should strive."

But this question is beside the point. We should practise *tapas* and self-control until they become our very nature. To ask, " How long, till when, am I to perform *sadhana* ?" —such language is improper in *bhakti*. *Bhakti* never permits diffidence and despair to arise. There would be no sinking of the heart in it. Noble ideas which can bring progressive joy and enthusiasm to *bhakti* are revealed in this Chapter.

(84) The triad of seva : master, servant, means of service

The universe presents countless objects to our eyes. We can divide them into three classes. As the *bhakta* wakes up in the morning, only three objects appear before him. First his mind goes to the Lord. Then he makes preparations for His worship. "I am the servant, the devotee; He is my Lord, the master whom I serve"—these two are ever present. Now what remains is the rest of creation, which is the means for the worship. The whole of creation is intended to provide the flowers, the fragrance, the incense and the lights. There are only three things, the servant devotee, the Lord to be served, and the creation which is the means for this service. It is this lesson that is taught in this Chapter. But when one worships some image, all the objects of creation do not seem to him means of worship. He goes and fetches a few flowers from the garden, gets hold of a couple of incense sticks and prepares some food-offerings. He wishes to choose a few objects. But there is no need for such selection, according to the comprehensive teaching of the Fifteenth Chapter. All the means of *tapas*, all the means of *karma*, are means of service to the Lord. Some of them we would call flowers, some incense and some food-offerings. In this way, we should make all actions means of worshipping the Lord. It is thus we should look at it. There are only these three things in the world. To the way of non-attached effort which the *Gita* tries to impress upon our hearts, it gives a form full of *bhakti*. Thus, it takes away from action the character of action and renders it easy.

When in an *ashram* some one has to do a lot of work, it never occurs to him to complain, "Why should I alone do so much work?" There is a beauty in this. If the worshipper gets four hours instead of the usual two for his worship, would he complain, "Good Lord, I had to worship for four hours today!"? On the contrary, he would rejoice all the

more. One has this experience in an *ashram*. We should have the experience everywhere in life. Life should be consecrated to service. He is *Purushottama*, the Supreme Person, who receives our service ; and I, ever absorbed in His service, am *aksharapurusha*, an imperishable person. "*Aksharapurusha*" means the eternal servant who knows no weariness and serves from the beginning of creation. He is like Hanuman who is ever standing before Rama with folded hands. He is an absolute stranger to laziness. Like Hanuman he stands, living for ever, absorbed in service.

Such a lifelong servant is called *aksharapurusha*, the unchanging, the immortal Person. The Supreme Self lives ; and I, His servant, I too live for ever. If the Master exists, then I too exist. Let us see who gets tired first, He by accepting or I by offering, service. If He has taken ten *avatars*, I too have had ten *avatars*. When He is Rama, I am Hanuman. When He is Krishna, I am Uddhava. Every time He is born, I am born too. Let this happy rivalry go on ! The soul serves the Lord in this way, *yuga* after *yuga*, aeon after aeon, and is never destroyed. This is the *aksharapurusha*. He, the Supreme Person, is the Master ; I am His servant, His slave. This *bhavana*, this attitude, should be kept steady and unchanging in the heart. This creation changes every moment and shines in manifold forms ; we should make it the means of worship, the instrument of service. Every act we perform is worship of the Lord.

He that is served, the Supreme Self, is *Purushottama*, he that serves the soul is the imperishable person ; but the means of service, creation, is *kshara*, perishable. There is deep significance in its being perishable. This is not a fault in creation, it is its glory. Because of this, creation is ever new. Yesterday's flowers will not do for today ; they are fit only to be cast away. Creation is perishable ; it is a good thing that it is so. This is the glory of service. Every day fresh

flowers are available for worship. In the same way, I will take on new bodies and render service to the Lord. Every day I shall give new forms to the medium of worship. It is because it is transient that it is beautiful. Today's moon is not the same as yesterday's. Every day it acquires a new grace. What joy it is to behold the waxing moon two days old ! How it shines upon the forehead of Lord Siva ! The beauty of the eighth-day moon is quite different. Then, only a few choice pearls are seen in the sky. During Full Moon, because of the brightness, not a star is to be seen. Then we see in the moon the face of the Lord. And majestic is the beauty of the New Moon night. How serene and undisturbed its calm ! The sovereign brightness of the moon withdrawn, countless stars, small and large, blossom out in perfect freedom. The freedom of *amavasya*, the New Moon night, has full play. The moon, with its proud display of brightness, is not there. It has become one with the sun which gives it light. It has joined the Lord. Then it seems to show how the soul can surrender itself without being the cause of any sorrow to the world. The moon's form is transient, mutable ; but it gives joy through all its many forms.

It is its mutability that makes creation immortal. The form of creation flows like a gurgling stream. If the Ganga does not keep flowing, it would become a stagnant pool. The water flows in an unbroken stream. But it is for ever changing. One drop replaces another. And so the water lives. One finds joy in an object because it is new. In summer, we worship the Lord with flowers. In the rainy season, we offer the tender green *dub* grass. In autumn, it is the beautiful lotus. With the flowers and the fruits that are in season, the Lord is worshipped. That is why worship is bright and ever fresh. One never gets tired of it. If we write out the letter ' A ' for a child and tell him to write again and again over it, thickening the lines, it simply bores

him. He cannot understand why the lines should be made thick. He blunts the point of the pencil and does it as quickly as possible. But later he learns new letters and new combinations of letters. He begins to read many kinds of books. He experiences the masterpieces of literature. Then he has boundless joy. It is the same with worship. Because the instruments are ever new, the enthusiasm for worship grows. The habit of service develops.

Because of the transitoriness of creation we have fresh flowers every day. The cremation ground is near the village ; that is why the village looks beautiful. Old people go, and new children are being born. Creation is renewed every day. If we abolish the cremation ground out there, it would come in and occupy the house. You would get tired of seeing the same people day after day. It is hot in summer ; the earth is parched. But do not be afraid. All this will change. This burning heat is necessary for us to enjoy the pleasures of the rainy season. If the earth were not hot and dry, the first shower would make it slushy. And neither grass nor grain would grow on it. Once I was wandering about on a hot summer day. My head was hot. I was filled with joy. A friend said to me, " You will get sunstroke." I said, " The earth below is burning. Let this clay doll too burn a little." What joy to have a cold shower on a burning head ! But he who is not scorched in the summer sun will bury his head in his books even when it rains. He will remain in his room, in his grave. He would not dance with joy under this vast sacred shower out in the open. But our *maharshi* Manu was a great enjoyer and lover of Nature. He says in his *Smrti*, " When it rains, declare a holiday." When it is raining without, who would sit within and chant Vedic verses again and again ? When it rains, we should sing and dance. We should become one with Nature. Then, earth and heaven meet and mingle. This beautiful sight fills us with joy. It is as if creation itself is teaching us.

The truth is that the mutability and transience of creation means freshness in the medium of worship. Thus we have creation forever presenting us with an ever-new progeny of means ; the immortal servant, standing ever ready to serve with girt loins ; and the Supreme Self to be served. Now let the game go on. The Lord Supreme gives me means which are endlessly new and wonderful and He takes from me service which springs from love. Giving me all sorts of things, He lets me play. He uses me in all sorts of ways. If only we can develop this attitude in life, what happiness would be ours !

(85) Egoless service is bhakti

The *Gita* wants every action of ours to be filled with *bhakti*. It is good that we worship God for half an hour now and then. Morning and evening, when the beautiful light of the sun spreads out its colours, it is an excellent idea to steady one's mind, to forget the world for a while and meditate on the Infinite. We should not give up such good habits. But the *Gita* is not satisfied with them. All our actions from morning till night should become worship of the Lord. Bathing, eating, or sweeping, we should think of the Lord. While sweeping, we should have the *bhavana*, the attitude, that we are cleaning the courtyard of the Lord, the master of our life. All our actions should thus become acts of worship. Once this attitude becomes yours, observe what a vast difference it makes to your life. How carefully we choose flowers for worship, how gently we carry them, so that they may not get bruised or crumpled or faded ! For fear that it might lose its freshness, we do not take the flower near our nose. This same attitude, this *bhavanà*, should enter into all our daily actions. In this very village of mine, my *Narayana*, my Lord, plays about in the form of this my neighbour. Therefore I shall keep this village clean and tidy. The *Gita* wishes to give us this attitude. Its great desire is to make

all our actions into worship of the Lord. To a King of Scriptures like the *Gita*, a half-hour *puja* yields no satisfaction. Its keen desire is that the whole of life should be filled with the Lord and be a form of worship.

The *Gita* teaches the *purushottama-yoga* and brings to perfection the life of *karma*. He is *Purushottama*, the Lord, receiving service ; I am His servant ; and all this creation the instrument for His service. If once we realise this relationship, what more do we need ? Tukaram says,

" Once the vision is attained, I shall serve.
I shall ask for nothing more, my Lord."

Then continuous service will proceed. Then there is no such thing as " I." " I " and " mine " are swept away, and then whatever remains is for the sake of the Lord. Life is lived entirely for the good of others. There is nothing else. This is what the *Gita* teaches again and again ; I shall remove from myself all sense of " I " and surrender my life to the Lord and fill it with *bhakti*. The Lord to serve, I the servant and Creation the means. Where is the talk of possession now ? Life has no care any more.

(86) The mark of jnana—seeing the Self in all three

Till now we have seen that we should thus fill *karma* with *bhakti*, but there should be in it *jnana*, too ; else the *Gita* would not be satisfied. This does not mean that these three are different things. We distinguish them only in speech. *Karma* means *bhakti*. There is no need to bring *bhakti* from elsewhere and put it into *karma*. It is the same with *jnana*. How shall we find *jnana* ? The *Gita* says, " By seeing *purusha*, the Self, everywhere. You are the servant, the Self eternally serving. He is the *Purushottama*, the Self eternally served. And this creation that bears endless new forms, that gives to us all kinds of means of service, that keeps ever flowing, this too is *purusha*, the Self."

What is meant by this attitude ? Everywhere we should assume the attitude of pure, flawless service. If your sandals squeak, give them some oil. In them too is something of the Lord ; so attend to them with care. Apply oil also to the *charkha*, the instrument of service. Listen, it calls for attention. It says, " *neti*, *neti*, I won't spin." This *charkha*, this instrument of service, is also *purusha*. Take good care of its belt, its sacred thread. Regard all creation as filled with *chaitanya*, as alive and aware. Don't set it down as inert. The *charkha* that sings out, " Om,"—is it inert ? It is an image of the Supreme. On the New Moon day of *sravan*, we shed our pride and offer worship to the ox. This is a great matter. Remembering this observance every day, let us look after our oxen and get appropriate work from them. The *bhakti* that rises in your heart should not stop with that day. The ox too is an image of the Lord. The plough, and all these other implements of agriculture, keep them in good order. All the tools of service are holy. How broad is this vision ! Worship does not mean offering flowers and consecrated rice, and sprinkling rose water. To keep the vessels clean and polished like crystals, that is worship of the vessels. To clean the lamp is to worship it. To whet the scythe and make it ready for reaping is worship. To lubricate the rusty hinge of the door, this is worship too. We should use all things with this attitude. We should keep all the materials of service clean and in good condition. The truth is that I am the *aksharapurusha*, the imperishable Self, He is *Purushottama*, the Self Supreme, and this Creation, the means of service, this too, is *purusha*, the Supreme Being. Once we have the vision of the play of *chaitanya*, of intelligence, everywhere, we can say that *jnana* too has entered our action.

First we put *bhakti* into *karma*, devotion into action. Now, we add *jnana* to it, we make the divine elixir which will transform life. The *Gita* has in the end brought us to the way

of service filled with *advaita*, the sense of oneness, and leaves us there. Wherever we look in creation we see three *purushas*. *Purushottama*, the one Supreme Person, has assumed these three forms. In reality, the three together constitute one Person. There is nothing but oneness. Here the *Gita* has led us to the highest peak. *Karma*, *bhakti*, *jnana* have all become one. Man, God and Creation have all become one. Between *karma*, *bhakti* and *jnana* there is now no conflict. In his *Amrtanubhava*, Jnanadev gives an example dear to Maharashtra :

> " Out of rock we chisel the Lord, His temple and His followers. Why should not the acts of *bhakti* be like this too ?"

Out of the rock, we make the temple, and the throne and the image of God. Out of the same rock, we make the devotee standing in front, and carve too the fruit he offers. One big rock assumes all these different forms. Why should not the same thing happen with *bhakti* too ? Even in the relationship of Master and servant, why should there not be oneness ? This outward creation, these materials of worship, distinct though they be, why should they not become of the nature of the Self ? The three *purushas* are after all one. To combine the streams of *jnana*, *karma* and *bhakti* into a mighty river of life—this is the perfect *purushottama-yoga*. The Master, the servant, and the instruments of service—they are all one. Now let us play the game of devotion and love.

He, on whose heart is impressed this *purushottama-yoga*, he alone performs true *bhakti*—

> " *sa sarvavid bhajati maam sarvabhaavena bhaarata.*"

> " Knowing all and being all, he worships me, O Bharata."

Such a man, though he is a *jnani*, remains a pure *bhakta*. Where there is knowledge, there is love too. Knowing the Lord and loving Him are not two different things. If we have the knowledge that the *karela* (the bitter gourd) is bitter, then

we have no love for it. There may be one or two exceptions ; but whenever bitterness is experienced, we feel disgust. The moment we hear of sugar-candy, our tongue waters, love for it wells up. But with the Lord, to know Him and to love Him are the same. But can one compare the sweetness of the Lord's form with so common a thing as sugar-candy ? The moment we have the knowledge of the sweet Lord, the same instant love for Him springs in our heart. The birth of knowledge and the birth of love are not two different events. There is no point in the discussion whether there is room for *bhakti* in *advaita*. Jnanadev says,

" Only know Vitthal.
This is *bhakti*, this is *jnana*."

Bhakti and *jnana* are two names of one thing.

The work that gets done when the supreme *bhakti* pervades life is not different from *bhakti* and *jnana*. *Karma*, *bhakti* and *jnana* together make a single beautiful form. And from it will spring, naturally, wonderful service full of love, full of knowledge. One loves one's mother ; but this love should express itself in action. Love is constantly dying, expending itself, and coming out in the form of service. The outer form of love is service. Love adorns itself with innumerable acts of service and comes out dancing. Where there is love, knowledge comes and joins it. When I am to serve a person, I should know what service would please him. Or else, it would be disservice or wrong service. Love must have knowledge of that which it would serve. To spread through action the power of love, knowledge is needed. But at the root of this knowledge, there must be love. Without it, knowledge would be useless. An act performed through love is very different from an ordinary act. As the son comes home tired from the field, the mother looks at him with natural love and says, " You are tired, my child." Look how much power there is in this slight action. Weave all the

actions of your life with the warp and woof of *bhakti* and *jnana*. This is what is called *purushottama-yoga.*

(87) The essence of all the Vedas in the palm of my hand

This is the essence of all the *Vedas*. The *Vedas* are infinite. But the distilled essence of the infinite *Vedas* is this *purushottama-yoga.* Where are these *Vedas* ? Their ways are strange. Where is their essence ? At the very beginning of this Chapter it is said, " He whose leaves the *Vedas* are." My brother, the *Vedas* fill every leaf of this tree. The *Vedas* are not hidden in the *Samhitas* (collections of *mantras*) or in your books and treatises. They pervade the whole universe. Shakespeare speaks of

> "………Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones…………………"

The idea is that the *Vedas* are neither in Sanskrit nor in the *Samhitas*, but in all Creation. If you serve, they will appear before you. We say, "*prabhaate karadarsanam* "— " looking at one's palm early in the morning." All the *Vedas* are in that palm and they say, " Serve." Consider whether your hands worked yesterday, whether they are fit to work again today and whether they carry the marks of service. When the hands are worn out with service, then the destiny that Brahma ordained for you becomes clear. This is the meaning of " looking at one's palm in the morning."

People ask, " Where are the *Vedas* ?" My brother, they are in your hands. It is said Sankaracharya had knowledge of all the *Vedas* in his eighth year. Then poor Sankara must have been a dull fellow. He needed eight years ! I am the *Vedas* living and awake. All the generations that have gone before have found their fulfilment in me. I am the fruit of this long line. From the seed of the *Vedas* came this fruit. In my fruit are gathered the seeds of endless *Vedas*. The *Vedas* within me have increased five-fold and fifty-fold. The truth is, the essence of the *Vedas* is in our hands. We

have to build our lives on the foundations of service, love and knowledge. This is what is meant by saying that the *Vedas* are in our hands. The meaning that I see is the *Veda*, not something, somewhere, outside. The saints, who are the embodiment of service, declare, "It is we who know the meaning of the *Vedas*." The Lord says, "Me alone all the *Vedas* know. I am the light of the *Vedas*, their essence, the *Purushottama*." If we can make this essence of the *Vedas*, the *purushottama-yoga*, our own, if we can make it part of our lives, what joy it would be ! The *Gita* shows us how the *Vedas* themselves are revealed in the actions of such a man. In this Chapter is present the whole essence of the *Gita*. The whole of its teaching is revealed here. All of us should labour day and night to inform our lives with it. What else ?

CHAPTER XVI

A SUPPLEMENT —THE CONFLICT BETWEEN DIVINE AND DEMONIC TENDENCIES

(88) The dawn of Purushottama-yoga : attainment of divine qualities

In the first five Chapters of the *Gita*, we saw the whole scheme of life and the means of achieving life's purposes. Then, from the Sixth to the Eleventh Chapters we had a vision of *bhakti*. In the Twelfth Chapter we compared the *saguna* and *nirguna* forms and saw the qualities of the *bhakta*. Throughout this Chapter we analysed thoroughly the two principles of *karma* and *bhakti*. Then there remained the third principle of *jnana* and this we studied in the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Chapters. We learnt how to separate the Self from the body, how to master the three *gunas* and in the end see God everywhere. The Fifteenth Chapter gave us the complete science of life, which reaches perfection in *purushottama-yoga*. After that, nothing remains.

I cannot bear to see *karma*, *jnana* and *bhakti* separated. To some seekers established in *karma*, this is the only thing that appears worth while. Others regard *bhakti* as an independent method and place all their emphasis on it. Still others choose *jnana*. Life does not mean mere *karma* or mere *bhakti* or mere *jnana*. I do not like this " mere " philosophy. And I do not accept the opposite view that would combine *karma*, *bhakti* and *jnana*. Nor do I like the utilitarian philosophy of a little of *bhakti*, a little of *jnana* and a little of *karma*. The theory of successive stages—first *karma*, then *bhakti*, then *jnana*—this too I do not accept. I wish to experience that that which is *karma* is *bhakti* and *jnana* too.

The sweetness, the shape and the weight of a cake are not things apart. When we put it into our mouth, we eat up its form, absorb its weight and taste its sweetness. The three

are mingled together. In every particle of the sweet cake is found its form, its weight and its sweetness. It is not as if the shape alone is found in one particle, the mere weight in another, and the sweetness by itself in a third. In the same way, the spirit should pervade every action of our life—every action should be full of service, full of love and full of knowledge. Every part of life should be filled to overflowing with *karma*, *bhakti* and *jnana*. This is called *purushottama-yoga*.

It is easy to say that the whole of life should be given over to the spirit, but if we begin to think of what these words mean, we shall see that, in order to render absolutely flawless service, we have to act in the confident belief that our hearts are moved by pure *jnana* and *bhakti*. Therefore, this ultimate state in which *karma*, *bhakti* and *jnana* are inseparably one is called *purushottama-yoga*. Here we reach the goal of life.

Now, what is said in the Sixteenth Chapter ? Just as, before the sun rises, its light begins to spread, so too, before the *purushottama-yoga* full of *karma*, *bhakti* and *jnana* rises in our lives, the dawn of good qualities shines forth. The Sixteenth Chapter describes the light which is to shine in the perfect life. It also describes the darkness with which it has to battle before it emerges. As proof of the existence of something unseen, we wish to have some visible symbol. How are we to know that service, love and knowledge have entered our life ? When we have worked hard in the fields, we harvest the grain, measure it and bring it home. This Chapter indicates how in the same way we can assess our *sadhana*—what experiences we went through, what good qualities we acquired, what good habits we formed, how far in reality our life was made up of service. The aim of this Chapter is to enable us to measure how far the art of life has developed and progressed. To this growing art of life, which waxes like the moon, the *Gita* gives the name of " *daivi*

sampat," divine attainments. The opposite tendencies it calls "*asuri sampat*," demonic attainments. The Sixteenth Chapter describes the conflict between the divine and the demonic qualities.

(89) The armies of violence and non-violence

Just as in the First Chapter the Kaurava army stood face to face with the Pandava army, so here, the divine army of good qualities is brought face to face with the demonic army of bad qualities. From very early times there is the tradition of representing through symbols the struggle that rages between good and bad in the heart of man. In the *Vedas*, Indra against Vritra ; in the *Puranas*, *devas* against *danavas* ; in the epic, Rama against Ravana ; in the scriptures of the Parsis, Ahuramazda against Ahriman ; among the Jews, Jehovah against Satan ; in Islam, Allah against Iblis—such conflicts are found in all religious traditions. While in poetry concrete things are described metaphorically through subtle objects, in religious works subtle inward movements are described by giving them clear concrete forms. In one, the gross is described through the subtle, and in the other, the subtle in terms of the gross. This is not to say that the battle described at the beginning of the *Gita* is merely imaginary ; it may have been a historical event. But the poet here uses it to achieve his chosen purpose. Through the image of a battle he explains what a man should do when his mind is deluded by conflict of duties. The Sixteenth Chapter describes the conflict between good and evil. The *Gita* uses the allegory of war.

Kurukshetra is both outside us and within us. When we observe it carefully, it is the battle raging within that we see assuming shape in the world without. He who seems to be my enemy is only the passion in my heart taking on a shape and standing, out there. Just as my image, handsome or ugly, appears in the mirror, it is the bad and good thoughts

of our mind that appear without as our enemies and friends. As we see in dreams what we have seen while awake, so we see in the world without what is in our hearts. Between the battle within and the battle without, there is little difference. To speak the truth, the real battle is only within ourselves.

Within us there are good qualities on one side and bad ones on the other. And both armies are well arranged. An army needs a commander. The good qualities have their own commander named "*abhaya*," fearlessness. Fearlessness has been given the first place in this Chapter. This is not mere accident, but deliberate. Without truth good qualities have no value ; but then, for truth, fearlessness is essential. In an atmosphere charged with fear, good qualities cannot grow ; in fact thay become themselves bad qualities, and good efforts and tendencies get weakened. Fearlessness is the commander of all good qualities ; but the army has to be watched front and rear, and on both sides. The direct attack will of course be in front, but one may also be stealthily set upon from behind. While, in front, Fearlessness stands alert, Humility guards the rear. This is an excellent arrangement. Here twenty-six qualities are enumerated. If we have twenty-five of these qualities, but have *ahamkara*, egoism or pride in these, there is every chance of stealthy attack from behind in which we shall lose all that we have now. That is why the virtue called Humility is stationed in the rear. In the absence of Humility, there is no knowing when victory will turn into defeat. Thus by placing Fearlessness in front and Humility in the rear we can develop all the good qualities. It would not be wrong to say that the twenty-four good qualities placed in between these two great virtues, are for the most part synonyms of *ahimsa*. Compassion, tenderness, forgiveness, serenity, patience, non-violence, loyalty, all these are only other names of *ahimsa*. In the twin qualities of *ahimsa* and *satya*, non-violence and truth, all good qualities are

included ; they are the essence of them all. But the case of *fearlessness and humility* is different. Fearlessness makes advance possible and humility ensures safety. With our stock of *satya* and *ahimsa*, we should advance fearlessly. Life is vast. We should travel in it without let or hindrance. If, lest we should make a false step, we remain ever humble, no danger will come to us. Now we can proceed joyously, applying truth and non-violence everywhere. The truth is that *satya* and *ahimsa* grow only through fearlessness and humility.

While, on one side, the army of good qualities is thus arrayed, on the other, the army of bad qualities also stands ready. There is no need to say very much about bad qualities like vanity and ignorance. Our whole life is founded on vanity. And of ignorance it can be said that it has become a beautiful excuse, which we trot out on every occasion, almost as if ignorance were anything but a crime. But the Lord says, " Ignorance is a sin." Socrates says just the opposite of this. In the course of his trial he says, " What you think is a sin is only ignorance, and how are you going to punish ignorance ?" But the Lord says, " Ignorance too is sin." According to legal theory ignorance of Law cannot establish innocence. Ignorance of God's law is also a great crime. Both the Lord and Socrates mean the same thing. The Lord tells us how to regard our own ignorance, and Socrates tells us how to regard the sins of others. Other people's sins we should forgive. But it is a sin to excuse even ignorance in oneself. We should not allow the least vestige of ignorance to remain in ourselves.

(90) The growth of ahimsa : four stages

The divine qualities on the one side, the demonic on the other—thus the two armies stand arrayed against each other. Of these, we should leave the demonic qualities and join the divine qualities. The divine qualities of *satya* and *ahimsa*

have been developed from time immemorial. And between then and now, during all this time, too, there has been great progress. But, even so, there is plenty of room for further progress. We have by no means reached the end of the process. As long as we belong to a social organism, there will be endless opportunity for development. Though the individual development is complete, there still remains the growth of society, the nation and the world. Offering his own development as manure, the individual should help society and the millions of people in the nation to grow. Though from the beginning of time *ahimsa* has been developed by man, the process of evolution is still going on.

It is worth studying how *ahimsa* has developed. We would then understand how the life of religion has developed step by step and what scope there is for further growth. In the beginning the non-violent man had to consider how to save himself from the attacks of the violent. At first the *kshatriya* class was set up for the protection of society, but it went too far and started devouring society itself. Then the non-violent *brahmins* began to consider how society could be saved from these power-mad *kshatriyas*. Parasurama, though a devotee of *ahimsa* himself, resorted to violence. He set out to destroy the *kshatriyas*. For removing the violence of the *kshatriyas*, he himself adopted violence. Though this was an effort of *ahimsa*, the attempt did not succeed. Twenty-one times he destroyed the *kshatriyas* ; still they survived, because the method was wrong in its very basis. He who set out to destroy the *kshatriyas* became a *kshatriya* himself and added to their numbers. How then could the *kshatriya* caste be destroyed ? He himself had become a *kshatriya*, and the seed of violence survived. If one cuts down the trunk and branches of a tree, but preserves the seed, one will only see the tree sprouting up again and again. Parasurama was no doubt an excellent fellow, but his attempt was strange.

Himself becoming a *kshatriya*, he tried to clear the world of *kshatriyas*. He should have begun with himself. He should have cut off his own head first. When I point to Parasurama's fault here, it does not mean that I am more intelligent than he. Compared with him, I am a child ; but I stand on his shoulders, and can therefore see much further without effort. The very basis of Parasurama's action was wrong. It is not possible to remove violence when one is oneself full of violence. On the contrary, one only adds to the number of the violent. But this was not realised at the time. The great men of those days, men of non-violence, acted according to their lights. Parasurama was a great exponent of non-violence for that age. He did not practise violence for the sake of violence. He did violence in order to establish non-violence.

But that experiment failed. Then came the age of Rama. Then the *brahmins* began to think about it again. They had already given up violence ; they had resolved never to commit violence themselves. How then to escape the attacks of *rakshasas* ? They thought, " Here are these *kshatriyas* who practise violence anyhow ; why should not the *rakshasas* be destroyed through them ? One uses a thorn to remove a thorn. We shall stand aside." That is why, to protect his *yajna*, sacrifice, Visvamitra took Rama and Lakshmana and had the *rakshasas* destroyed by them. Now we think, " The *ahimsa* that cannot protect itself, that cannot stand on its own legs, this lame *ahimsa*, how can it sustain itself ?" But men like Vasishtha and Visvamitra saw nothing wrong in finding protection in the strength of the *kshatriyas*. But what if there was no *kshatriya* like Rama ? Then Visvamitra would have said, " I would rather die than commit violence." For the experiment of ending violence through violence had already been attempted. Now this much had been clearly accepted that they would not give up their own non-violence. If they could not find a *kshatriya*, they would prefer to die. To that

extent the ground had been prepared. In the *Aranyakanda* of the *Ramayana*, there is an episode. Walking in the Dandaka forest, Rama asks, " What are these heaps ?" The *rishis* answer, " These heaps are made up of the bones of brahmins, of non-violent brahmins. When the violent *rakshasas* attacked them, they did not resist. They lost their lives. It is their bones that are piled up here." In this non-violence one sees the self-sacrifice of the brahmins; but, at the same time, they had a wish that others would protect them. Where there is such weakness, non-violence cannot reach perfection.

In later times, good men went further and tried a third method. They resolved, " We shall never seek the help of others to save ourselves. Our *ahimsa* is enough to protect us. That is the only true defence." But this experiment was conducted on the individual plane. They perfected this individual method, but it stopped with the individual. If violent men attacked society and men went and appealed to those saints and asked, " What shall we do now ? ", it is doubtful whether they would have given a definite answer. These saints, who had practised *ahimsa* in their own lives to perfection, would only have said, " Brothers, we can do nothing." It is childish impertinence on my part to find fault with the saints in this way, but I am only describing what I see, sitting on their shoulders. May they forgive me for this ! And they will, for great is their forgiveness. It would not be true to say that they were never moved to use the method of *ahimsa* on the social plane. It may be that the conditions of the time did not seem propitious. And so they experimented individually, by themselves. But it is out of such experiments, conducted separately by individuals, that a science is born. Science arises from the combined experience of many.

After these individual experiments of saints, today we are conducting the fourth experiment. And that is, the whole

of society joining together to oppose violence with the methods of *ahimsa*. Thus there have been four experiments so far. In each of them there have been and there are imperfections. This is inevitable in the course of progress. But it must be said that each method was perfect for its time. And ten thousand years later, people will see even in our non-violent struggle an element of violence. Many more experiments in pure *ahimsa* will of course take place yet. Not only *jnana*, *karma* and *bhakti*, but all good qualities are evolving. There is only one perfection, and that is the Supreme. The *purushottama-yoga* of the Bhagavad Gita is complete, but in individual life and social life these qualities are yet to develop fully.

Words too keep growing. The *rishis* are considered to be the seers of the *mantras*, not the makers of them. For it is not as if the meaning they found in the *mantras* is the only true meaning. They had one vision of it. To us, coming after them, a more evolved meaning may appear. That we can see a little more than they is not due to any special merit in us, for we only build on the foundations they laid. I have been speaking so much on the growth of *ahimsa* alone. That is because, if we take the common essence of all these good qualities, we shall find that it is *ahimsa*. Moreover, we are engaged today in a non-violent struggle. And so we considered the evolution of this principle.

(91) A great experiment in ahimsa: giving up meat-eating

Till now we saw one aspect of *ahimsa*, how a non-violent man defends himself against the attacks of the violent, how *ahimsa* has evolved in the struggle between individuals. But there is also a conflict between man and animal. Man has not yet been able to put an end to conflict between human beings, and he lives by filling his stomach with the flesh of animals. Men cannot stop fighting with one another even now, nor can they live without eating helpless lower

animals which also live. Man cannot yet live like a man. Though he has existed for thousands of years, he has not yet learnt how to live. But, now, even in this matter there is a progress. There was a time when man lived on animals only. But even then, the more intelligent, the nobler ones, did not like this. They laid down a restriction that, if they had to eat meat, they would eat only the flesh of animals offered in sacrifice. The intention behind this was to limit violence. Many people gave up meat altogether ; but those who could not do so were permitted to offer it to the Lord in sacrifice, do a little penance, and then eat it. It was thought then that, as a result of the condition that one could only eat meat in a *yajna*, a sacrifice, violence would be controlled. But later on, *yajna* became common and whoever felt like it performed a sacrifice and ate the meat. Then the Lord Buddha went a step further. He said, " If you want to eat meat, eat it. But don't bring the name of God into it." The aim of both these statements is the same, that violence should be controlled, that somehow people should be drawn into the path of self-control. Both from the performance of *yajnas* and from non-performance of them, we learnt to give up meat. Thus, little by little, we gave up eating meat.

In the history of the world it is only in India that this great experiment has been attempted. Millions of people here have given up meat-eating. If today we do not eat meat, it is no mark of our greatness. Because of the merit of our ancestors, we have got used to this. Why, we are surprised when we hear or read that the *rishis* of old ate meat. We say, " What nonsense! How could *rishis* eat meat? It's impossible." On the other hand, their greatness is that, though used to taking meat, they had self-control enough to give it up. We do not have to go through all that trouble now. We have, without effort on our part, inherited their virtues.

In Bhavabhuti's " *Uttararama Charita*," Vasishtha arrives at the hermitage of Valmiki. To welcome him a young calf

is killed. A small boy says to an older boy, "The big bearded tiger that came to our *ashram* today has eaten up our little calf, hasn't it" And the bigger boy says, "Hush ! He is the great *rishi* Vasishtha. You mustn't say such things." The fact that they ate meat in ancient times, and that we don't do so now, does not mean that we are better than they. The fruit of their experience has come to us easily. We should now progress further. We should make an effort to give up even milk altogether. It is degrading for man to drink the milk of other animals. Ten thousand years hence the men of the future will say of us, "Why did our ancestors have to take a solemn vow not to drink milk ? Ram ! Ram ! How could they bring themselves to drink milk ? Were they such savages ?" We should fearlessly and humbly make experiments and progress steadily. The tree of truth should throw out new branches. There is plenty of room for development. No quality has as yet evolved to its fullness.

(92) The three asurik ambitions : Power, Culture, Wealth

We should develop the divine tendencies and keep away from the demonic. The Lord describes the demonic qualities so that we may keep away from them. There are three important things here. The essence of the demonic character is contained in "power, culture and wealth." Such people believe that theirs is the only great culture and their overweening ambition is to thrust it on the whole world. To the question, "Why should our culture be thrust on others ?" they answer, "Because it is the best." "How is it the best ?" "Because it is ours." To the *asurik* man as to the *asurik* empire, these three things are necessary.

The *brahmins* too believe, "Ours is the best culture of all. Our *Vedas* contain all wisdom. Vedic culture should be victorious all over the world." "*Agrataschaturo vedaan prshthatah sasaram dhanuh,*" "the four *Vedas* in front, the bow and arrow ready at the back." Thus equipped, fly the flag.

of your culture everywhere. But where there is the strung bow and arrow at the back, the poor *Vedas* in the hands are as good as finished and done with. The Muslims too think that what is found written in the Quran is alone true. The Christians think likewise. They feel that no matter how virtuous a non-Christian may be, he can never enter Heaven unless he has faith in Jesus. They have provided only one door to the temple of God, and that is the door of Jesus. People build for themselves houses with many doors and windows, but for the house of their poor, dear Lord they provide only one door. Everybody imagines,

> " I am the noblest born ; my wealth is great.
> Where is my equal? "

Who am I ? I belong to the line of Bharadvaja. I can trace without a break my lineage from that great *rishi.* People in the West feel the same way. They say, " Noble Norman blood runs through my veins." Don't we in our country trace a *guru-sishya* line ? It begins with Siva, the *adiguru,* the first teacher. And then, Brahma or somebody else ; then Narada and Vyasa ; then some other *rishi* ; then, in between, ten or fifteen other names ; and after them, my *guru,* and then, finally, myself. Through this pedigree, we try to prove our own greatness and that of our culture. My dear fellow, if indeed your culture is great, let your conduct reveal it. Let its splendour pervade your life. But this doesn't happen. The desire to spread throughout the world the culture that we do not practise in our own life, in our own home—this way of thinking is *asurik.*

" My culture is the noblest," we say. It is just like this to think, " I am the only person fit to hold all the wealth of the world. I want all the world's wealth, and I will make it mine.". And why should I make it mine ? To divide it equally among all. In order to do this, I first bury myself in this wealth. Akbar too said in the same way, " Why don't

these Rajputs join my empire ? If there is one big empire, peace would be established." Akbar sincerely believed this. The *asuras* of our day too think that they should collect all the wealth of the world. What for ? To distribute it again to everybody.

And for this I need power. All power should be concentrated in one hand. The whole world should come under my control. " Self-rule " is my rule. To obey me is freedom. In this way, culture, power and wealth—these three are encouraged by the *asurik* temperament.

There was a time when the *brahmins* ruled society. They made the *sastras* and the codes of law ; kings bowed before them. The age passed and gave place to the age of the *kshatriyas*. Their horses roamed free over their empire, and they went in triumphal progress in all four directions. And this *kshatriya* culture too went as it came. The *brahmin* said, " I am the giver of knowledge, the others are takers. Who but me can be the *guru*, the teacher ?" The *brahmins* were proud of their culture. The *kshatriyas* set store by power, saying " I killed this man today, I shall kill some other man tomorrow.' Then came the age of the *vaisyas*. " Hit the back if you like, but not the belly "—this is the whole philosophy of the *vaisya*. His heart is in his stomach. " This wealth is mine, and that, too, shall become mine."—this is his prayer, this is his resolve. Do not the English tell us, " If you want *svaraj*, take it. But give us the right and facilities to sell our manufactured goods here. Then by all means preserve your culture. Keep your loincloth and sit there with your culture."? The wars of today are all waged for the sake of trade. This age too will go ; it has already begun to depart. All these are forms of the *asurik sampat*.

(93) Self-control, the way to shake off desire and anger

We should push away from us our *asurik* tendencies. Briefly, *asurik sampat* means desire, anger and greed. These

three are forces that set the world dancing. Let us put an end to this dance. We must give it up. Anger and greed spring from desire. When circumstances favour desire, greed arises ; when they obstruct desire, anger arises. Again and again the *Gita* tells us to beware of these three. This is what is said at the end of the Sixteenth Chapter, that desire, anger and greed are the three broad gateways of Hell. They are thronged by crowds coming in and going out. The roads to Hell are very wide. There is room for many motor cars ; you can find many companions on the way. But the path of truth is narrow.

How then are we to escape from desire, anger and greed ? By accepting the way of control of the senses. This is the path laid down in the *sastras*. The *sastras* are nothing but the experience of the saints. The *sastras* are made up of the experience the saints gained through their efforts. Therefore hold fast to this principle of self-control. Do not have any doubt or fear that it will fail. Please do not raise such arguments or questions as, " What will happen to the world if desire and anger disappear ? Should not the world go on ? Should there not be at least a little desire, a little anger? " There is already plenty of desire and anger, my brothers, a great deal more than you need. Then why do you confuse your minds needlessly ? There is a grain or two more of desire, anger and greed than you wish for. Do not worry yourself that the human race will come to an end when desire dies. No matter how many children you produce, a day will come when the very name of man will disappear from the earth. The scientists say so. The earth is slowly getting colder. At one time the earth was excessively hot. Then there were no living creatures on it. Life had not been born. A time will come hereafter when the earth will become excessively cold and all life will perish. This may take millions of years. No matter how prolific you are, that final dissolution

is certain. The *avatars* of the Lord are for the preservation of *dharma*, not for the preservation of numbers. As long as *there is one man devoted to dharma, one man who is afraid of sin and steadfast in truth, there is no cause for worry.* The Lord will take care of him. Whether thousands of people are alive or dead makes no difference when their *dharma* is dead.

Remembering all this, live an ordered life in creation, controlling your senses. Do not follow your own whims. The good of the world does not mean doing the things the world wants you to. To go on increasing the population, or piling up wealth, is not progress. Developing is not a matter of numbers. If society multiplies beyond limit, people would start killing one another. Man would first feed fat on animals and birds. Then, perhaps, on his own children. If he accepts that there is any value in desire and anger, there is not the least doubt that man will end up by eating man. Doing good to the world means showing mankind the pure and beautiful path of virtue. If by freeing itself from lust and anger the race of man disappears from the earth, it will reappear on Mars. There is no need to worry. The unseen God pervades the universe. He will take care of us. Therefore, first let us become free. There is no need to look very far into the future. Do not worry about all creation and the entire human race. Increase your own moral power. Fling aside desire and anger. " Free your own neck from the noose first." This would be achievement enough.

There is joy in standing on the shore and watching from afar the surge of the sea of *samsara*. But what joy is there in the sea for the man who is drowning in it, with his eyes and nose full of water ? The saints stand on the shore and enjoy the sight of the sea. Unless we bring into our lives this saintly attitude of remaining aloof from *samsara*, we can have no joy. Be like the lotus-leaf, and let the water roll off

you. The Buddha has said, " The saints stand on the summit of the hill, and look down at *samsara* and find it trivial." If you, too, climb to the top and look down, this vast expanse would appear trivial. And your mind will not be drawn to *samsara*.

The Lord, in this Chapter, exhorts us to give up the demonic and acquire the divine qualities. Come, let us make the effort.

CHAPTER XVII

ANOTHER SUPPLEMENT : PROGRAMME FOR THE SEEKER

(94) A disciplined life frees the mind

Dear brothers, we are slowly approaching the end of our study. In the Fifteenth Chapter, we saw the complete science of life. The Sixteenth Chapter was a supplement. In the mind of man and in society which is its image, a great war rages between two attitudes, two ways of living, two sets of qualities. Of these, we should develop the divine qualities —that was the teaching contained in the first supplement, the Sixteenth Chapter. Today, in the Seventeenth Chapter, we come to the second supplement. Looked at in one way, we can call this the *yoga* of " *karya-krama*," of regularity in action. The *Gita* here indicates our daily routine. Today we shall examine the programme for every day.

If we wish our nature to be free and joyous, we should bring our activities into some order. Our daily actions should proceed on an accepted basis. It is only when our life proceeds within bounds and in an accepted, disciplined way, that the mind can be free. The river flows at its own sweet will, but the flood is bound in the two banks. If it were not thus bound, its freedom would be wasted. Keep before your eyes the example of the *jnani*, the seer. The sun is the teacher of the seers. The Lord taught *karma-yoga* first to the sun. Then, from the sun, it came to Manu, that is, to man the thinker. The sun is free and independent. He is regular— it is in this regularity that the essence of his freedom lies. We have seen from experience that, if we are in the habit of walking regularly on the same road, we are able to think about other things while walking, without paying attention to our steps. If we walk on a new road every day, all our attention is concentrated on the road. Then the mind can

have no freedom. It follows that, in order that life may be not burdensome but joyful, we should limit our activities and order them aright.

Therefore the Lord sets down in this Chapter a programme of action. At our birth we are born into three orders. The *Gita* has laid down this programme in order that man may fulfil the functions of these three orders and make his life happy. What are these three ? The first is the body that wraps us. The second is the vast universe that surrounds us, the boundless creation of which we are a part. The society into which we are born, our parents, our brothers and sisters, our neighbours—these form the third. Every day we use these three orders, we wear them out. The *Gita* wishes that we should try unremittingly to replenish what is lost through us, and thus make our life fruitful. We should perform without any thought of self these three sets of duties we were born with.

Yes, we should fulfil these duties, but what is the method of doing so ? The method is to combine *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas*, sacrifice, the giving of gifts and penance. These words we know, but not their meaning. If we understand their meaning and bring it into our lives, body, Nature and society, all three orders, will benefit, and our whole life will shine with freedom and joy.

(95) The yoga of activity—three kinds

To understand this, let us first see what "*yajna*" means. Every day we make use of Nature. If a hundred of us crowd together in one spot for a day, that part of Nature appears spoilt. We foul the atmosphere and mess up the whole place. In eating food we consume creation, little by little. We should make up for it. It is for this that the institution of *yajna* is created. What is the purpose of *yajna* ? To make up for the harm that has been caused to creation—this is *yajna*. We have been ploughing the earth for thousands of years

and thus impoverishing it. *Yajna* says, "Return its strength to the soil. Plough the land and feed it with sunlight. Give it manure."

To make good the loss, that is one purpose of *yajna*. Another purpose is to purify the things we use. We use the well and make the place all round it dirty and slushy. This part of creation, thus disfigured, we should clean up. We have to remove the dirt. We should make up for loss and we should purify. In addition to these, we should do a little direct construction. This too is included in *yajna*. If we wear cloth, we should spin a little every day and make something new. Growing cotton, raising crops, spinning and weaving, all these are acts of *yajna*, sacrifice. Whatever we do in a *yajna* should not be done for our own sake, but with the feeling that it is one's duty to make up for the loss that one has caused. This is not altruism. We are, from the beginning, debtors. We are born into the world with a load of debt on our heads. Whatever we do to discharge this debt is *yajna* or service, not altruism. By this service we must discharge our debt. At every step we use the order of creation. Therefore we have to do *yajna* to replenish loss, to purify things and to create new things.

The second order is our human society. Father, mother, teacher, friend, all these toil for our sake. "*Dana*", the rite of giving, was instituted in order to discharge this debt to society. This, and not doing good to others, is its meaning. I have received from society boundless service. When I came into this world, I was weak and helpless. This society brought me up so that I, then so little, have grown so big. Therefore I in my turn should serve society. "Doing good" is serving someone from whom we have received no service. But in this case we have already received everything from society. The service that we render to free ourselves from this debt to society, that is *dana*. To help human society to progress

is *dana*. The effort made to replenish Nature's loss is *yajna* ; the help given through body, mind, substance and other means to discharge the debt to society is *dana*.

Besides these, there is a third order, that of the body. This too wears out day by day. We wear out by use our mind, our knowledge, our senses. *Tapas*, penance, has been prescribed in order to remove the defects and distortions that arise in the body.

Thus it is our duty to act in such a way that the work of these three orders—Nature, society and the body—may proceed smoothly and efficiently. We create any number of good and bad institutions ; but these three orders were not instituted by us. They have come to us naturally. They are not put together by any man. Therefore it is our natural *dharma* to replenish through *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas* the wear and tear in these three orders. If we act in this way, all the energy in us will be harnessed to this purpose. There will be nothing left for other things. We shall need all our energy to keep these three orders—Nature, society and the body, —in good condition. If we too could say like Kabir, " Lord, I am returning the shawl just as you gave it to me. See it for yourself," that would be reward enough. But in order to deserve this reward, we should bring into actual practice the triple programme of *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas*.

Here we have regarded *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas* as if they were three different things, but to tell the truth, there is no difference between them. For the three orders of Nature, society and the body are not absolutely distinct. Society is not outside creation ; nor for that matter is the body. These three together make up the beautiful order of Nature. The creative effort we make, the *dana* we give and the *tapas* we perform, all these can be called *yajna* in the comprehensive sense. The *Gita* in the Fourth Chapter speaks of *yajnas* like the *yajna* of *dravya*, matter, and that of *tapas*, austerity.

All the service we render to these three orders will take the form of *yajna*. But it is necessary to keep this service disinterested. In this there can be no room whatever for expecting any fruit, for we have already received the fruit. The burden of debt has already settled on our heads. What we have taken, we must now return. Through *yajna* we maintain equilibrium in Nature, through *dana* in society, and through *tapas* in the body. Thus this programme is intended to preserve the state of balance in all the three orders. Through this, purity is attained and evil thoughts eliminated.

For the sake of this service, it is necessary to take some food. Eating too is a part of *yajna*. The *Gita* calls this eating of food "*aahaara*," offerings. As the engine needs coal, the body needs food for its fuel. Although this offering of food is not in itself *yajna*, it is clearly an element in the fulfilment of *yajna*. To fetch a flower from the garden and place it on the head of the image is worship ; but so too is working in the garden to produce the flower. Any action performed for the sake of *yajna* is also a kind of worship. It is only when we offer food to the body that it will serve our purpose. Any action which is a means to the performance of *yajna* is itself *yajna*. The *Gita* calls these actions "ancillary actions," acts of *yajna*. The offerings I make to the body to sustain it for service are *yajna*. The food accepted for the sake of service is holy.

Again, all these things must spring from sincere devotion. The inward attitude should be one of surrendering all service to the Lord. This is a great thing. Without an attitude of surrender to the Lord, one cannot be full of service. If we forget what is most important, surrender to the Lord, we shall get nowhere.

(96) Making the means pure

But then, when can we surrender all our actions to the Lord ? Only when they are *sattvik*, purified. Then,

and only then can we do so. *Yajna*, *dana*, *tapas*, all should be made pure. We saw, in the Fourteenth Chapter, the philosophy of making our actions *sattvik*. In this Chapter, the *Gita* explains its application.

In this plan of purification, the *Gita* has two aims. The service that is being rendered to the world through my external actions of *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas*, can itself, viewed from within, be described as spiritual exercise. The service of creation and the development of the spirit do not demand two different courses of action : service and spiritual growth are not two different things. For both, the effort made, the action performed, is the same. And even this action has at last to be surrendered to the Lord. Service to Society, spiritual effort, and the attitude of surrender to the Lord,— this *yoga*, this composite result, must flow from the same action.

Two things are needed to make *yajna sattvik*. They are avoiding fruitless actions and also the desire for fruit. If there is expectation of fruit in *yajna*, it becomes *rajasik* ; if it is fruitless, it becomes *tamasik*.

Spinning is *yajna*. But if we do not inform it with spirit, our mind is not one-pointed and the *sutra-yajna* becomes lifeless. Unless the mind within joins the hand working in the outer world, the whole action departs from the prescribed order. And disorderly actions become lifeless. Into such action, *tamas* enters. Through it, no noble thing can be created. From it, no fruit will grow. Even though there is no desire for fruit in performing *yajna*, it ought to yield noble fruit. If the mind is not in the action, if the spirit is not in it, then it becomes a burden. How then can it yield good fruit ? If the outward action goes wrong, it must be because the mind did not accompany it. Therefore pour your soul into the action. Bind the outward with the inward. In order to discharge our debt to creation, we must

produce noble fruit. One should not allow action to become fruitless ; that is why it is essential that inward feeling should combine with outward action according to rule and order.

When, in this way, disinterestedness finds place in our hearts and fruitful action goes on according to rule, our mind and heart will become increasingly pure. What is the touchstone of inward purity ? Examine the outward action. If that is not flawless and beautiful, we may take it that there is impurity in the mind too. When does beauty come out in action ? On the action performed with pure heart and unstinted effort, the Lord sets the seal of His approval, His grace. When the Lord, well-pleased, touches the action with the hand of love, beauty appears there. Beauty is the grace of the Lord granted to pure and unremitting effort. When the sculptor gets absorbed in carving, he feels that this beautiful image was not shaped by his hands. As he goes on chiselling, at the last moment, somehow, from somewhere, beauty comes of itself and settles there. Without *chitta suddhi*, inward purity, how can the art of God manifest itself ? The beauty, the loveliness of the image, is nothing but the beauty of the sculptor's soul that has been poured into it. The image is an image of our mind. All our actions are images of our mind. If our mind is beautiful, its image in the medium of action will also be beautiful. We should judge the purity of outward action by the purity of the mind, and the purity of the mind by outward action.

One word more ! And this is, in all these actions *mantra* too is necessary. Action without *mantra* is meaningless. While spinning, bear this *mantra* in your heart: "Through this thread I tie myself to the poor in this land." If we work for hours on end, but without this *mantra* in our heart, it is all wasted. The mind will not attain purity through this action. Consider spinning. If we apply to the action this *mantra*, that the Lord hidden in the cotton manifests Himself in the form of the thread, the action will then become

truly pure and beautiful. It will become worship, service to the people and to God. In the tiny mouth of the child Krishna, Mother Yasoda saw the whole of Creation. In this thread too, charged with *mantra*, you will begin to see the whole universe.

(97) Purity in Food

For true service, purity in food is necessary. As is the food, so is the mind. The food we eat should be regulated. Not what food we take, but how much we take, is the more important question. It does matter what food we choose to eat, but it matters even more that it is in right measure. Whatever we eat will necessarily have its effects. What do we eat for ? That good service may be done. Eating too forms a part of *yajna*. Look on food with the *bhavana* that it is necessary in order to make the *yajna* of service yield fruit. Food should be pure and clean. The food that a man eats can never be too pure. Our society has performed enough *tapas* for the sake of purity in food. In India, many efforts have been made towards this. Thousands of years have passed in these experiments. We cannot tell how much *tapas* has gone into them. It is only in India that many entire communities have freed themselves of meat-eating. Even those who eat meat give it a secondary place and do not take it every day ; they even feel that they are doing something improper ; these too have in their minds given up meat. It was to restrict meat-eating that *yajnas* were first developed, and it was again for the same purpose that *yajna* was later abandoned. The Lord Krishna changed the very meaning of the word "*yajna*". Sri Krishna increased the importance of milk. The wonderful things that Krishna did are not few ; but which Krishna are the people of India mad after ? The name most dear to the people of India is "Gopala-Krishna." The young and the old, every one, knows and loves Krishna, the cow-herd, with the flute at His lips,

in the midst of His cows. The great benefit of learning to cherish the cow was that people gave up meat-eating. Cow's milk came to be valued, and meat-eating fell off in importance.

Still, it is not as if perfect purity in food has been attained. We should now make efforts for further progress. The Bengalis eat fish, and so many people are surprised at this. But it is not right that we should condemn them for this. Bengal produces only rice and that does not provide enough nutrition for the body. We shall have to conduct experiments to find out what vegetable substitutes can be found for fish. For this purpose men of heroic sacrifice will be born. It is such people who lead society forward. The sun keeps burning, and that is why, wherever we go, we are able to maintain our normal temperature and remain alive. When in a society shining suns of *vairagya*, desirelessness, appear and, breaking the bonds of environment with the power of faith, fly without wings into the sky of the ideal, then we ordinary people acquire the little *vairagya* that is useful in the world. I often think, on such occasions, of how much *tapas* the *rishis* had to perform to stop meat-eating, and how many lives had to be sacrificed.

By now our society has to this extent attained purity in food. This treasure which our ancestors have earned through endless sacrifice, let us not lose it. Do not let go this special excellence of Indian culture. It is not enough that we somehow manage to exist. That is easy. Even the animals do so. Then, are we like the animals ? No, there is a difference. The growth of this difference is the growth of culture. Our country has conducted strenuous experiments in giving up meat-eating. Let us continue them. At any rate, let us maintain our present position and not go back.

I stress this because at present a great many people have begun to show a liking for meat. Today, the cultures of the

East and of the West are influencing each other. I am confident that the ultimate outcome of this will be good. The impact of Western culture disturbs our unthinking beliefs. When blind faith is shaken, there is no harm in it.What is good will remain, and what is bad will be destroyed. But blind unbelief should not replace blind belief. It is not as if belief alone can be blind, that it has a monopoly of blindness. Unbelief too can be blind.

People have begun to think again about meat-eating. The appearance of a new idea, whatever it may be, delights me. It shows signs of wakefulness. But if one wanders around rubbing one's eyes, not yet fully awake, one may stumble and fall. Therefore, until one is fully awake and can see steadily, it is good that one keeps in check one's hands and feet. Consider well ; look carefully up and down, from right and left, inside and out, and all round. Use the scissors of the mind on *dharma.* The *dharma* that can be cut up by thought is worthless ; let it go. That which your scissors cannot cut, but which on the contrary shatters your scissors, that is true *dharma*. *Dharma* is not afraid of thought. Therefore, think ; but do not rush into action. If you do something while only half awake, you will fall down. However powerful the thought, forbear from action for a while. Exercise discipline. Do not throw away the virtue stored up for you.

(98) The Gita's programme for harmonious living

Purity of food keeps the mind pure. The body gains strength. One is able to do good to society. Both the individual and society are happy. There will be no conflict in a society where *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas* are found, where actions take place according to rule and are accompanied by *mantra*, contemplation. As, when two mirrors face each other, each is reflected in the other, in the same way, true to the laws of reflection, the individual and society will

mutually strengthen peace. My happiness is that of society, and society's is mine. We can examine each of these and find that they are both one. We shall experience *advaita*, oneness, everywhere. Separateness and disloyalty disappear. The *Gita* shows us the way of establishing such an order. If we follow the *Gita's* plan in our daily programme of action, how good it would be !

But today there is conflict between the individual and society.

How this conflict can be resolved is the talk everywhere. Where does the individual stop and society begin ? Which is primary and which secondary ? Which is superior ? Upholders of individualism regard society as lifeless. When the sepoy comes before him, the commander speaks to him gently. He would even use the honorific plural. But his words of command to the regiment would be peremptory. It is as if he considers the regiment as a lifeless log to be kicked about hither and thither on the field. We see, here too, how the individual is alive, but the collective is lifeless. Here you are, two or three hundred people in front of me. Whether you like it or not, I go on speaking at you ; I keep saying whatever occurs to me. I treat you as if you were lifeless. But if any of you approach me, I shall have to listen carefully and answer questions after a great deal of thinking. But now, I make you sit still here for hours together.

" Society is inert, the individual is conscious "—so say some. Others magnify the collective. My hair has fallen, my hand is broken, my eyes are gone, my teeth have dropped out. In addition to this, one lung is useless. If in spite of it all I live, it is because each organ, looked at separately, has no life of its own. If any one of them perishes, the whole does not perish. The collective, the body, continues to live and move. Thus we have two contradictory ways of thinking. The conclusions you come to, depend on your

point of view. Creation assumes the colour of the spectacles you wear.

Some give more importance to the individual, some to society. This is because of the spread in society of the concept of struggle for existence. But is existence meant for struggle ? Rather than this, why don't we die ? Conflict is on the side of death. It is because of this that we distinguish between *svartha* and *paramartha,* between one's own good and the supreme good, the good of the Self. God bless the fellow who first thought up the difference between *svartha* and *paramartha.* Should we not honour the mind which created the illusion of a difference where none really exists ? It is wonderful how he set up this difference and taught it to people. This is like the Great Wall of China ; like making a boundary of the horizon and imagining that nothing exists beyond it. The reason for all this is the absence of a life lived as *yajna.* That is why the difference between the individual and society has come about.

But in reality it is impossible to separate the individual and society. If a curtain is hung in the middle of a room to divide it into two and it is blown about by the wind, sometimes one part appears larger and sometimes the other. The size of the compartment is not fixed and permanent ; it depends on the wind. The *Gita* transcends these quarrels. These quarrels are imaginary. But the *Gita* says, " Keep within the bounds of inner purity. Then no conflict will arise between the good of the individual and that of society. They will not obstruct each other." What the *Gita* specially does is to remove this difference, this conflict. Even if there is a single individual who obeys the discipline of the *Gita,* the whole country will prosper, because of that single man. A nation consists of the individuals in it. A country in which there are no such individuals, men of knowledge and disciplined conduct,—how can we call it a nation ?

What is India ? India is Rabindranath, India is Gandhi, and a few other people like them. The outside world conceives of India in terms of a few such individuals. Take three or four names from ancient times, four or five from the Middle Ages, and seven or eight of today, add to them the Himalayas and the Ganga, and we have India. This is the definition of India. The rest is only a commentary on it, an expansion of it. From milk we get curds, and from curds butter-milk and butter ; there is no conflict. To determine the quality of the milk, we determine its butter-coefficient. The worth of a society is judged by its individuals. There is no conflict between the individual and society. How can there be ? Even between one individual and another, there should be no conflict. If one is better endowed than another, what does it matter ? No one should suffer privation, and the riches of the rich should benefit society. That is enough. Does it make any difference whether my money is in my left pocket or my right pocket ? After all, both are mine. When someone is rich, I am rich, the nation is rich —we can establish this in practice.

But we erect these walls of difference. If the body and the head are separated, they would both die. Therefore do not separate the individual and society. The *Gita* teaches just this, how one and the same action destroys the difference between *svartha* and *paramartha*, the good of oneself and the good of the Self. Between the air in this room and the unbounded atmosphere without, there is neither difference nor conflict. If I imagine that there is conflict and shut the doors and windows, I shall only be suffocated to death. If, assuming that there is no conflict, I throw open the room, the boundless air flows into it. The moment I cut off my land and my house from those of others, that very moment I am cheated of infinite wealth. If this one little house of mine is burnt down or collapses, I think that all is lost, I cry and beat

my breast. But why should I do so ? Why weep and lament ? Why form a narrow conception at first, and then cry ? When I say that this five hundred rupees is mine, I forfeit the infinite riches of Creation. When I think that these two are my brothers, all my countless other brothers in the world are cut off from me. We do not think of this. Look how small and narrow a man makes himself. In truth, *svartha* should be *paramartha*, one's own good should be the supreme good. The *Gita* shows us such an easy and beautiful way, by which the highest co-operation and harmony can develop between the individual and society. What opposition is there between the tongue and the stomach ? We should give to the tongue the amount of food the stomach needs. When the stomach says enough, one should stop feeding the tongue. The stomach is one organ, the tongue is another. I am the king of both. There is perfect oneness among all these organs. Where did you bring it from, this unhappy conflict ? Just as between the different limbs and organs of the body there is no conflict, but only harmony and co-operation, so too between the individuals in a society. It is in order to develop this co-operation in society that the *Gita* teaches us the system of action consisting of *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas*, performed in purity of heart. Through such action both the individual and society prosper.

The man whose life is lived as *yajna* belongs to everybody. Each child feels that his mother loves him alone. In the same way, everyone feels that such a person belongs to him. He is dear and acceptable to the whole world. To everyone it appears that he is their life, their friend, their comrade.

" Happy is the man whom all the world loves," says Samarth Ramdas. The *Gita* teaches us how to live such a life.

(99) The mantra of dedication

The *Gita* says that, after making one's life a *yajna*, one should dedicate it entirely to the Lord. After one's life has

become pure service, why should one surrender it further to the Lord ? We say easily enough that life should become full of service, but it is very difficult to make it so. It may be possible at last, and that to some extent, after innumerable births. Even if all actions are filled with service, made up entirely of service, even then there is no saying that they have become full of worship too. Therefore with the *mantra* of "*om tat sat,*" we should surrender all action to the Lord.

It is difficult for acts of service to be full of service, unmixed with baser metal. For, even in *paramartha, svartha* comes in ; even in serving the Supreme, selfishness comes in. Absolute *paramartha* is not possible. There can be no action in which there is no trace of selfishness whatever. Therefore, we should wish that, day after day, more and more, disinterested and unselfish actions should take place through our hands. If we wish that our service should become progressively purer, we should surrender all our actions to the Lord. Jnanadev has said, "To the *bhakta*, sweet as Nectar is the Name ; the *yogi* labours for the art of living." But the sweetness of the Name and the art of living are not different. There is a harmony between the sound of the Name within and the practice of the art of life without. The *yogi* and the *bhakta* are both one. When we surrender our action to the Lord, *svartha, parartha* and *paramartha*—one's own good, others' good and supreme good—all become one. "You" and "I", at first so much apart, should be made one. "You" and "I" together make up "We". Now, "We" and "He" must be brought together. First I must achieve oneness with this creation, and then oneness with the Lord. It is this idea that is conveyed by the *mantra*, "*om tat sat.*"

The names of God are countless. Vyasa has made the "*Vishnusahasranama,*" "The Thousand Names of Vishnu," out of them. All the names that we can think of are His.

Whatever name springs up in our mind, let us see its meaning in Creation, and shape our life in accordance with it. Seeing in Creation that name of the Lord which shines in our heart, let us fashion ourselves in its image. I call this the "*tripada gayatri*," the *mantra* with three feet. Let us take the name, "*dayamaya*," "All-Compassionate," We should walk in the light of the knowledge that he is indeed the All-Compassionate, "*rahim*." Now let us open our eyes and see in Creation this Lord, the Ocean of Compassion. The Lord gives to every child a mother to serve it, and air for it to breathe. Seeing this scheme of Compassion in the universe, let us fill our own lives with compassion. The *Gita* gives the name of the Lord which was most current in the age. That is, "*om tat sat*."

"*Om*" means "Yes, God exists." Even in this twentieth century God exists. "*sa eva adya sa u svah*"—He alone exists today ; yesterday He alone was, and tomorrow He alone will be. He is permanent. Creation is permanent. And I have girded my loins and am ready to serve. I am the *sadhaka*, the seeker ; He is the Lord ; this Creation is the offering and the means of worship. It is only when our hearts are filled with this feeling that we can say that "*om*" has entered our being. He exists, I exist, and my worship too goes on—thus the feeling of "*om*" should settle in our minds and find expression in our *sadhana*, our work. Whenever we see the sun, we see it with its rays. It cannot exist without them. It never forgets its rays. In the same way, whenever any one looks at us, we should be seen with our *sadhana*, our work. It is only then that we shall have made "*om*" our own.

Then comes "*sat*." The Lord is "*sat*," that is, He is good ; He is auspicious. Be filled with this *bhavana*, this feeling, and in Creation, enjoy His benignity. Look at the trough in the water ! When you fill a pitcher from the tank,

the depression is filled up in a moment. How benign, how loving. A river cannot tolerate emptiness. It runs forward to fill it up.

" *nadii vegena suddhyati* "

The river of Creation purifies itself by speed. All Creation is good, is auspicious. Let your action too be likewise. In order to make our own this " *sat*," this name of the Lord, all our actions should be pure and full of *bhakti*. Just as the *soma* juice is filtered for the sacrifice, we too should examine all our actions and efforts constantly and make sure that they are flawless.

" *Tat* " now remains. " *Tat* " means " that," the other, something untouched by Creation. The Supreme is different from Creation and untouched by it. As the sun rises, the lotuses bloom, the birds begin to fly and darkness disappears. But the sun remains afar, quite aloof from the changes it brings about. When we have attained detachment, when our actions are disinterested, we may take it that " *tat* " has entered into our lives.

In this way the *Gita* teaches us how to take the Vedic Name " *om tat sat* " and surrender all our actions to the Lord. Earlier, the Ninth Chapter spoke of surrendering all actions to the Lord. This is what is said in the *sloka* " *yat karoshi yadasnaasi* "—" Whatever you do, whatever you eat." In the Seventeenth Chapter, this idea is more fully dealt with, that the action which is surrendered to the Lord should be *sattvik*, for only then will it be worthy of being offered to the Lord—this is specially stressed here.

(100) The Name of the Lord takes away sin

All this is very well. But the question now arises, " This Name, *om tat sat*, is only for the pure man. What is the sinner to do ? Is there a Name which even in the mouth of a sinner is beautiful ? " The Name *om tat sat* has this power too. Every one of the names of the Lord has the

power to lead us from untruth to truth. It can take us from sin towards sinlessness. We have to purify our lives little by little. The Lord will surely help. In our weakness He will support us.

If a man tells me, " On one side is a life pure but proud, and on the other, a life sinful but humble ; which would you choose ? " ; though my tongue may not utter it, I would still feel in my heart of hearts, " The sin which makes me think of the Lord, let that sin come to me. If a life of virtue will bring forgetfulness of the Lord, then let me rather have the life of sin that would bring me thoughts of Him." This does not mean that I plead for a life of sin. But sin is not so sinful as pride in one's virtue. Tukaram says,

" All this knowledge, I fear, my Lord, will only hinder me." Yes, we can do without this greatness. It is far better to be a sinner and grieve.

" The child that is too clever, even the mother pushes him away."

But the ignorant child, the mother keeps in her lap. I do not want to have a virtue that is sufficient unto itself. I would rather be a sinner clinging to the Lord. The holiness of the Lord can hold all my sins and still survive. Let us try to avoid sins. If we fail, our hearts will weep, our minds tremble. Then we will remember the Lord. He has been standing by, watching the fun. Cry out to Him, " I am a sinner ; I have therefore come to Your door." The virtuous man has a right to think of the Lord because he is virtuous. The sinner has a right to think of the Lord because he is a sinner.

CHAPTER XVIII

CONCLUSION—THE FULFILMENT OF THE RENUNCIATION OF FRUIT—THE GRACE OF THE LORD

(101) Arjuna's last question

My brothers, now by the grace of the Lord, we have reached the Eighteenth Chapter. In this world of chance and change and mutability, the fulfilment of any resolve depends on the will of the Lord. And in jail, at every step, one experiences uncertainty. To start anything in jail and to expect to conclude it here is far-fetched. When we started this study of the *Gita*, we did not expect that it would be possible to finish it here. But, by the will of God, we are approaching the end.

In the Fourteenth Chapter, life, that is, all our activity, was divided into three classes, *sattvik*, *rajasik*, and *tamasik*. Of the three, we learnt that we should give up the *rajasik* and *tamasik*, and take hold of the *sattvik*. Then, in the Seventeenth Chapter, the same matter was treated in a different way. *Yajna*, *dana* and *tapas*, sacrifice, gifts and penance, or, in one word, *yajna*, sacrifice, is the essence of life. Then, in the Seventeenth Chapter, it was suggested that actions like eating, which are ancillary to sacrifice, should be accepted only as a form of sacrifice, and only after making them *sattvik*. We should accept only those actions which are *sattvik* in nature and come to us in the form of sacrifice ; it is proper that we give up all other kinds of action. We have also seen why we should constantly remember the *mantra*, " *om tat sat*." " *Om* " stands for constancy, " *tat* " for detachment, and " *sat* " for the *sattvik* nature, for purity. In our endeavour, there should be constancy, detachment and purity. Only then can we surrender it to the Lord. From all this it appears that some actions should be done and others given up.

If we look at the whole message of the *Gita*, we are taught in place after place that we should not renounce action. The *Gita* speaks of the renunciation of the fruits of action. Everywhere in the *Gita* it is taught. "Go on constantly performing action, but keep renouncing the fruits of it." This is one side of it. The other appears to be that we should perform some actions and renounce others. Therefore, in the beginning of the Eighteenth Chapter, Arjuna asks the final question, "On the one hand, it is said that no matter what action we do, we should first renounce the fruit. It is said on the other that some actions must be perforce renounced and others are worth performing. How are these two statements to be reconciled ?" This question is framed so that we may understand clearly the direction in which life should proceed. It seeks to understand the secret of the renunciation of fruit. In what the *sastras* call "*sannyasa*" (renunciation) action should be renounced in its very form and nature. That is, the form of action is itself to be renounced. But in "*tyaga*," sacrifice, what is renounced is not the action, but the fruit of it. Now the question is , "For the renunciation of fruit that the *Gita* enjoins, is it necessary to renounce action itself ?" Tested by the touchstone of renunciation of fruit, is there any benefit to be derived from *sannyasa*, the renunciation of action ? Where are the limits of *sannyasa* placed ? Where and what are the limits of *phalatyaga* and *sannyasa*, renunciation of fruit and renunciation of action ? This is Arjuna's question.

(102) Renunciation of fruit—the sovereign touchstone

In reply to this question, the Lord has said one thing clearly, that the touchstone of renunciation of fruit is of universal application. The principle of renunciation of fruit can be applied everywhere. There is no conflict between renouncing the fruit of all actions and renouncing *rajasik* and *tamasik* actions. The nature of some actions is such that,

if we apply to them the device of renouncing the fruit, they fall off of themselves. Performing actions after renouncing fruit means just this, that some actions are to be given up. It naturally includes the direct renunciation of these actions.

Let us consider this matter a little more deeply. When we say, " The actions that are interested, that spring from desire, do them after renouncing the fruit," we cut the ground from under their feet. Faced with renunciation of fruit, actions that spring from desire and actions that are forbidden cannot stand. To act with renunciation of fruit is not something merely artificial, designed, or mechanical. When this test is applied it becomes clear of itself what actions should be performed, and what should not be. Some people complain, " The *Gita* merely teaches us to perform actions renouncing the fruit, but it does not tell us what actions to perform." But it only appears so ; it is not really so. Because, once it is said, " Perform action after renouncing the fruit," it becomes clear what actions we should perform and what not. Violent actions, actions filled with falsehood, actions like theft—it is quite impossible to perform them after renouncing the fruit. The moment such actions are tested on the touchstone of renunciation of fruit, they simply disappear. When the light of the sun spreads, all objects begin to look bright, but does the darkness too appear bright ? No, it disappears altogether. This is the condition of forbidden and interested actions. We must test all our actions on the touchstone of renunciation of fruit. Renunciation of fruit is the test for performing any action. When this test is applied, interested actions show themselves up as unworthy. They are fit for *sannyasa*, fit only to be renounced. What now remains is only pure *sattvik* action. Such actions should be performed without egoism. Renouncing interested actions is itself action. Apply the scissors of renunciation of fruit to this action too.

Then the renunciation of interested action will become natural.

Thus we have seen three things. The first is that, whatever we do, we should do it after renouncing the fruit. The second is that *rajasik* and *tamasik* actions—prohibited and interested actions—when tested on the touchstone of renunciation of fruit, fall off by themselves. The third is that, even to the giving up of such actions, the scissors of *phala-tyaga*, renunciation of fruit, should be applied. We should not give room to the egoism which says, " How much have I renounced ! "

Why should *rajasik* and *tamasik* actions be given up ? Because they are not pure. Being impure, they leave a mark on the mind of the doer. But on further thought we find that even *sattvik* action has some defects. Indeed in all action there is some imperfection. Take even the *svadharma* of agriculture. It is pure and *sattvik*. But even in agriculture, which, as *svadharma*, is all *yajna*, there occurs unavoidably some *himsa*, violence. So many lives are destroyed in ploughing and other operations. So too when, to prevent the surroundings of a well from becoming slushy, the ground is hardened and plastered. When we open the doors and windows in the morning and the sunlight enters the house, innumerable lives are destroyed. What we call cleaning up turns out to be large-scale murder. If even in *sattvik* action performed as one's *svadharma* there is some flaw, what then are we to do ? That is the question.

I have already said that we have yet to develop to the full all the good qualities. We have tasted so far only a drop of qualities like *jnana*, *bhakti*, *seva*, *ahimsa*—knowledge, devotion, service, non-violence—and so on. It is not as if we really know them fully. Life progresses by experience. In the Middle Ages there was a theory that, because of the violence in agriculture, a non-violent person should not take

to it. He could be a merchant. Producing food was considered a sin, but not buying and selling it. But by shirking action in this way, we can do no good to ourselves. If one goes on contracting one's actions in this way, one will end by destroying oneself. As man thinks of ways of freeing himself from action, action multiplies itself. In order that you may trade in grain, has not someone else to grow the grain ? Then, are you too not responsible for the violence involved in growing it ? If it is a sin to grow cotton, it is equally a sin to sell it. There may be something wrong in growing cotton, but it is wrong to think of giving it up on that account. To push away all actions, saying that neither this, nor that, and indeed nothing, should be done—in this attitude there is no true compassion. On the other hand, this is the end of compassion. When the leaves are plucked, the tree does not die ; on the contrary it puts forth fresh leaves. In narrowing one's action, one narrows one's soul.

(103) The true way of freeing oneself from activity

Now the question is, " If there is defect in all actions, then why should we not give them all up ? " The answer to this has already been given once. The concept of giving up all actions is very beautiful. The thought of it fascinates one. But how is one to give up these countless actions ? Will the method of giving up *rajasik* and *tamasik* actions serve for *sattvik* actions too ? How to save oneself from those *sattvik* actions that are defective ? This would be like " *sendraaya takshakaaya svaahaa*," offering an oblation " to Takshaka with Indra." The funny thing is that when a man does this, not only does Indra, the immortal, not die, but Takshaka, the mortal, escapes death and grows stronger. In *sattvik* actions there is merit, but also a little defect. But if, because there is some evil mixed up with the good, you would offer up, renounce, the good along with the evil, not

only will the good, because of its strength, not perish, but evil will certainly go on increasing. By this foolish kind of mixed sacrifice, the Indra of merit does not indeed perish, but the Takshaka of evil, though mortal, will escape death. How then are we to renounce them ? If we drive away the cat because it is a nuisance, the nuisance of the mice will increase. If we destroy the snakes because they do harm, other creatures multiply and destroy the crops and, as a result, thousands of people may die. Therefore, renunciation must be accompanied by intelligence.

Machindranath told Gorakhnath, " Wash this boy and bring him back." Gorakhnath caught hold of the boy's feet, dashed his head against a stone, and spread him on a hedge to dry. Machindranath asked him, " Have you brought the boy washed ? " Gorakhnath answered, " I have washed him white and put him out to dry." Is a boy washed this way ? We don't wash clothes and boys in the same way. There is a lot of difference between the two. So, too, there is a lot of difference between renouncing *rajasik* and *tamasik* actions and renouncing *sattvik* actions. *Sattvik* actions should be renounced in a special way.

Unintelligent actions can only produce topsy-turvy results. Tukaram has said,

" Pleasure wells up within from sacrifice.
What then shall I do, O Lord ? "

When we make a little sacrifice, a great joy comes and sits on our necks. Thus even the little sacrifice is belied. To compensate for a little sacrifice, they put up huge monuments. Than these, that old hut was better. It was good enough. It is better to continue to keep one's coat and turban than to wear nothing but a loin-cloth and to surround oneself with wealth and pleasure. Therefore the Lord has explained separately the way of renouncing *sattvik* action. All the *sattvik* actions must be done, but we should pluck

and throw away the fruit. Some actions should be utterly rooted out, while of others only the fruit should be plucked and thrown away. If there is a stain on the body, it can be washed off ; but if the skin itself is dark in colour, what is the good of giving it a coat of whitewash ? Let the dark colour remain. Why do you pay attention to it ? Do not consider it inauspicious.

Once there was a man who, feeling that there was something inauspicious about his house, left it and went and settled in another village. That in turn seemed dirty to him, and he went away to the forest. There, as he sat under a mango tree, a bird's droppings fell on his head. He said, "This forest too is unfriendly," and went and stood in a river. In the river, the sight of the big fish eating up the small fish filled him with disgust. "The whole of creation," he concluded, "is unkind. There is no way out except through death." So he came out of the water and kindled a fire. Then a gentleman who was passing by said, "My brother, why are you preparing to die ?" He replied, "Because the whole world is inauspicious." The man said, "If this unclean body of yours, this mass of flesh, begins to burn, how it would stink ! I live close by. Where could I go ? When a single hair burns, it smells so awful ! And now, all this flesh of yours will burn ! Just think a little of the stench you will spread." Then the man was bewildered and exclaimed, "If one can neither live in this world nor die in it, what is one to do ?"

That is to say, if we go about condemning everything as bad and inauspicious, and rejecting it, we simply cannot carry on. If you try to avoid small actions, other great big actions will come and sit on your head. It is in the nature of action that we do not get rid of it by giving up its external form. If a man spends his energies on resisting the actions which come to him naturally with the current, if he swims

against the current, he will in the end succumb to weariness and be swept off by the stream. He should try to cross the stream with the help of actions which flow with the current. Then, little by little, actions will cease of their own accord. Even without renunciation of action, activity will fall off. Action will not leave us, but activity will disappear.

Between action and activity there is a difference. For example, there is a big commotion somewhere, and we want to stop it. A policeman shouts at the top of his voice, "SILENCE !" To put an end to the noise there, he had to perform the intense action of shouting aloud. Another person comes up there and merely lifts his finger. With only this, the people become quiet. A third person has but to come there, and stillness descends. One had to exert himself and perform an action ; the action of the second was a gentle gesture ; the action of the third was subtle. The activity becomes progressively less ; but all three alike do the work of calming the people. As inward purity grows, the effort in the action becomes less. From effort to gentleness, from gentleness to subtlety, and from subtlety to nothingness. Action is one thing, effort or activity is another. Action is that which is most desired by the doer—this is the definition of action. The grammarian Panini says, "*kartuh iipsitatamam karma.*" That is, in a sentence, "that which the subject—the *kartaa,* (the doer)—most desires to encompass is the object—the *karma,* (the action)." Action is that which is dearest to the doer—this is the definition of action. Thus, in Sanskrit *karma,* action, can be expressed by using the noun in the nominative or the accusative case ; but to express *kriya,* activity, an independent verb (*kriya-pada*) is necessary.

Understand therefore the difference between *karma* and *kriya,* action and activity. One, in his anger, shouts aloud ; another expresses it without opening his mouth. The *jnani,*

the seer, makes not the slightest effort, does no *kriya* ; but he performs infinite action, *karma*. The mere fact of his being can confer infinite benefit on the world. His presence is enough. Though his hand and feet do no work, he still works. As *kriya*, activity, becomes subtler and subtler, *karma*, action, becomes greater. If we carry this stream of thought further, we can say that, when the mind and heart become absolutely pure, in the end, activity tends towards zero and action towards infinity. First effort, then gentleness, then subtlety and at last nothingness—thus, the state of inactivity is reached of its own accord. But now, infinite action takes place by itself.

By pushing away the external forms of action, we do not get rid of action. This we shall experience gradually, if we go on performing action regardless of fruit. Browning has written :

" An unbelieving Pope won't do, you say.
It's like those eerie stories nurses tell,
Of how some actor played Death on a stage,
With paste-board crown, sham orb and tinselled dart,
And called himself the monarch of the world,......
Got touched upon the sleeve familiarly
By Death himself. Thus God might touch a Pope
At unawares, ask what his baubles mean,
And whose part he presumed to play just now ? "

The Pope would say, " I play the part because it is possible that as I go on acting, as I go through the motions of the part, some day, without my even realising it, faith will move within me."

Therefore, we should go on working without thinking of the fruit. Then, little by little, we shall attain the state of actionlessness.

(104) Svadharma : the final analysis

That is, we should completely give up *rajasik* and *tamasik* actions and perform *sattvik* actions. While doing so, we

should retain the perception that we should not give up the *sattvik* action that comes to us in an easy and natural way, even though it has some defects. If there are defects, let them be. If you try to turn your back on them, other defects will overtake you. Let your crooked nose remain as it is. If you attempt to cut it and improve it, you will only make it more frightful. It is good enough as it is. Though defective, because they come naturally, *sattvik* actions should not be given up. They must be performed, but their fruit should be renounced.

There is one thing more to say. The actions that are not yours by nature, even if they seem to you easy to perform, do not perform them. Do only the actions that fall to you naturally. Do not run about and get caught in the whirlpool of other, new actions. The actions that have to be artificially put together, keep away from them, however good they may be. Do not be beguiled by them. It is only when an action comes to us naturally that its fruit can be renounced. If a man runs about on all sides impelled by the greed for action, imagining that this is good, and that is good, how can he ever give up the fruit ? In this way, his whole life would be a failure. While thus, for love of the fruit, he desires to perform *paradharma*, the action that rightly belongs to others, he will let slip the fruit also ; he will have no steadiness in life. The attachment to action will cling to his mind. If there is greed even for *sattvik* actions, these too have to be given up. If you wish to perform such a variety of *sattvik* actions, into them too *rajas* and *tamas* will enter. Therefore perform only the *sattvik* action that falls to you naturally and easily as your *svadharma*.

Svadesi dharma, the national *dharma* ; *svajatiya dharma*, communal *dharma* ; and *svakalina dharma*, the *dharma* of the age—all these come together in *svadharma*, one's own *dharma*. These three combine to make up *svadharma*.

To determine one's *svadharma*, one should consider what is helpful and appropriate to one's nature and situation, and what duty falls to one. You have in you something unique and your own, your " you-ness," and that is why you are " you." In every individual there is something distinctively his own. The development of a goat depends on its retaining its goat-ness. It should remain a goat in order to grow. It is not for the goat to wish to be a cow. It is impossible for it to give up the goat-ness that has come to it through nature. It would have to give up its body, and take a new birth and a new *dharma*. But, in this birth, goat-ness is sacred to it. Don't you know the story of the ox and the frog ? There is a limit beyond which a frog cannot blow up its body. If it tried to become as big as an ox, it would only die. It is not right to copy others' forms. That is why it is said that *paradharma*, the *dharma* of others, is terrible and dangerous.

Again, in *svadharma* there are two parts. One changes, while the other does not. I am not today what I was yesterday, nor shall I be tomorrow what I am today. I am for ever changing. The *svadharma* of childhood is just to grow. In youth, I am full of the power of action, and should use it in the service of society. In maturity, others will get the benefit of my wisdom. While one part of *svadharma* is thus changing, the other part is unchanging. If we use the names of the old *sastras*, we should say, " Man has a *varna-dharma* and an *asrama-dharma*." While *varna-dharma* does not change, *asrama-dharma* is constantly changing.

Asrama-dharma changes in the sense that I complete the *brahmacharya* (student) stage and enter the *grhastha* (householder) stage, and then through *vanaprastha* (retirement) to *sannyasa* (renunciation). Though the *asrama* changes in this way, there is no change in *varna-dharma*. I cannot cross the bounds set by nature. The very effort to do so is false. The " you-ness " in you, you cannot give up. This is the

basis of *varna-dharma*. The idea behind *varna-dharma* is very beautiful. Is *varna-dharma* absolutely unchangeable ? Is the *brahminhood* of the *brahmin*, the *kshatriyahood* of the *kshatriya*, like the goat-ness of the goat or the cow-ness of the cow ? I accept that *varna-dharma* is not as inflexible as that ; but we should understand its hidden meaning. When the term " *varna-dharma* " is used for a device to maintain a social order, it must necessarily admit of exceptions. We have to accept these exceptions. The *Gita* too does so. In other words, understanding aright both these kinds of *dharma*, we should push away from us any other *dharma*, however beautiful and alluring it may be.

(105) Renunciation of fruit—its full meaning

From our development so far of the idea of the renunciation of fruit, the following principles emerge :—

(1) The complete renunciation of *rajasik* and *tamasik* actions.

(2) Renouncing the fruit of this renunciation ; even about this, let there be no egoism or pride.

(3) Without giving up the forms of *sattvik* action, renouncing only their fruit.

(4) Those *sattvik* actions which are to be performed after renouncing the fruit, even if they have imperfections, should be performed.

(5) By constantly performing such *sattvik* actions with renunciation of fruit, the mind and heart get purer and purer, and thus,—from intensity to gentleness, from gentleness to subtlety, from subtlety to nothingness—activity finally ceases.

(6) Activity disappears, but action—action benefiting the world—continues to take place.

(7) Even of *sattvik* actions, we should perform only those which come to us naturally. We should keep aloof from those actions that do not fall to us by nature, no

matter how good they seem. We should not be deluded by them.

(8) Even the *svadharma* that comes to us naturally is of two kinds, one changing, the other permanent ; *varna-dharma* does not change, but *asrama-dharma* keeps changing. The *svadharma* that ought to change, we should go on changing.

This will keep Nature pure. Nature should keep continuously flowing. If a stream begins to stagnate, it stinks. It is the same with *asrama-dharma*. Every man starts with his family. For the sake of growth he submits himself to the bonds of family. Here he acquires many kinds of experience. But if, having become a family man, he gets caught in it permanently, he will be destroyed. Being part of a family, which was *dharma* at first, now becomes *adharma* ; for now that *dharma* has become a thing that binds him down. If, out of attachment, he does not give up this old *dharma*, then a terrible situation arises. One should not have attachment even to a good thing. From attachment come cruel tragedies. If the germs of tuberculosis enter our lungs, unawares, they consume our whole life from within. In the same way, if the germs of attachment, through our carelessness, enter our *sattvik* actions, then *svadharma* will rot from within. Even in that *sattvik svadharma*, the evil odour of *rajas* and *tamas* will spread. Therefore, the changing *dharma* of the family should slip off from us at the right time. The same applies to national *dharma* too. If, even in national *dharma*, out of attachment we begin to think of the good of our nation alone, this patriotism may itself be an obstacle to our development. When attachment gets a footing in our hearts, our downfall begins.

(106) Attainment is only the last stage of sadhana

The truth is that, if you wish to attain the goal of life, then you should seek and find the *chintamani*, the precious jewel, of renunciation of fruit. It will show you the way.

This principle of renunciation of fruit also shows us the bounds within which to act. When this light is near, what we should do, what we should not do, what we should change and when, all this becomes clear of its own accord. But now we shall think of something quite different. Should, or should not, the seeker keep in mind the ultimate state when all activities cease ? Should the seeker keep his eyes on the state of the *jnani*, the seer, who does nothing, but through whom countless actions take place ?

No. Here too we should apply the touchstone of renunciation of fruit. The shaping of our lives is so beautiful that our needs will be met even without our looking for them. The noblest fruit of life is *moksha*, freedom. But even for that freedom, even for that state of inactivity, we should not be greedy. That state will come to us unawares, of its own accord. *Sannyasa* is not the sort of thing that comes at five minutes past two, all of a sudden. *Sannyasa* is not something mechanical. We cannot even be conscious of the way in which it grows in our life. Therefore, give up all thought of *moksha*, the achievement of freedom.

The *bhakta*, however, keeps saying to the Lord, "It is enough for me to love you. I do not want the final fruit of *moksha*." After all, *moksha* too is a kind of enjoyment, a kind of fruit. And to this fruit again we should apply the scissors of renunciation of fruit ; but this does not mean that we shall miss *moksha*. The scissors will break and the fruit grow stronger. Even as we give up the desire for *moksha*, we shall be moving towards it, without being aware of it. We should be so absorbed in *sadhana* that we forget all about *moksha*, and then *moksha* will come seeking us and stand in front of us. Let the *sadhaka* be steeped in his *sadhana*.

"*maa te sango astu akarmani*"

"Do not be attached to actionlessness." In the very beginning the Lord has said, "Do not be attached to the state of actionlessness, to *moksha*."

Now, in the end, He says again,

"*aham tva sarvapaapebhyo mokshayishyaami maa suchah.*"

"I shall deliver you from all sins, do not grieve." He says, "I am the master, the giver of *moksha*. Do not worry about *moksha*. It is enough if you attend to your effort."

By forgetting all about *moksha*, one's efforts become more noble. Then *moksha* will be enamoured of you and come to you. Round the neck of the seeker who, without desire for *moksha*, is absorbed in *sadhana*, in effort, *Moksha-lakshmi*, the Goddess of Freedom, will throw the garland of victory.

When we reach the ultimate bounds of *sadhana*, fulfilment stands there, waiting for us with folded hands. If a man who wants to reach home, stands under a tree in the forest, chanting "Home, Home,"—home will remain as far away from him as ever, while he will have to remain in the forest. If I think of home and take rest by the way, I shall stay far away from that ultimate place of rest. I should keep steadily at the job of walking. It is only then that home will, all of a sudden, come and confront me. By lazily thinking of *moksha*, my effort, my *sadhana*, becomes lax, and the goal recedes. Not to bother about *moksha*, but to remain absorbed in *sadhana*, is the way to attract *moksha*. Do not be greedy for rest, for the state of inaction. If you love *sadhana* for its own sake, *moksha* is sure to come.

You will not get your answer to a problem by shouting, "Answer, Answer !" It is only by following, step by step, the appropriate method, that you will get the answer. When the process is complete, the answer is found. How can we reach the end before the completion of the process ? How can we get the answer without the method ? How can the state of realisation be reached while yet one is in the state

of seeking ? When one is struggling in the water, what is the use of dreaming of the pleasures and the safety of the other shore ? Then all one's attention should be directed, all one's energy be applied, to pushing forward, stroke by stroke. First complete the *sadhana*, the process. Cross the sea. Freedom will come of itself.

(107) The triple state of the siddha

When the *jnani*, the seer, reaches the final stage, all activities cease ; they drop off. But this does not mean that in this stage there will be no activity at all. Actions may be done through him, or they may not. This last stage is surpassingly beautiful and noble. In that state, whatever happens, there is no thought about it. And whatever happens is beneficent and beautiful. He now stands at the summit of *sadhana*. And although he does everything now, he does nothing. Even when he kills, he does not kill. And when he does good, it is not he that does good.

This final state of freedom is also the last stage of *sadhana*. The last stage of *sadhana* is reached when *sadhana* becomes natural, easy. Then there is not even the thought that one is doing something. In other words, I should call this the " amoral " stage of *sadhana*. The stage of realisation is not a moral state. The little child speaks the truth, but that does not make him moral, because he has no idea of what falsehood means. To be acquainted with falsehood and yet to speak the truth, that is moral action. In the state of realisation, there is no falsehood at all ; there is only truth. Hence there is no question of morality. There, no forbidden thing can enter ; the ear cannot hear what should not be heard ; the eye cannot see what should not be seen. Only that which should be done will get done through the hands ; no effort is needed. That which should be avoided keeps itself off ; there is no need to avoid it. This is the state in which there is no morality. This culmination of *sadhana*,

call it amoral or beyond morality, it is here, in this transcendence of morality, that one sees the supreme heights of morality. This phrase, " transcendence of morality ", strikes me as happy. We may also call this the state of *sattvik* action which is free of *sattva*, is beyond goodness.

How is one to describe this state ? Just as before an eclipse darkness fills the sky, the shadow of the *moksha* which is to come at the death of the body begins to spread even before the body falls. Even while living in the body, the experience of the state of *moksha*, which is to come, begins. When we try to describe this state, words fail. However much violence a man in this state commits, he does nothing. By what measure can we measure his actions ? All the actions which take place through him will only be *sattvik*. Even when all activity has been exhausted, he will continue to confer blessings on the world. I do not know what language to use to describe this.

In this last state, there are three attitudes. One is that of Vamadeva. His famous declaration is, " All that there is in the universe, that am I." The *jnani*, the seer, becomes egoless. He loses attachment to the body, he reaches the end of activity as such. Now he attains a new state of being. This state cannot be contained in one body. A state of being is not a state of activity. It is the state in which *bhavana* is most pervasive and intense. We can, in some measure, experience this state of being. The mother becomes guilty because of the sin of the child. She is virtuous because of his virtue, sad because of his sorrow, and happy because of his happiness. This experience of identity, in the case of the mother, is limited to her child. She looks upon her child's sins as her own. The seer too, by the power of his *bhavana*, takes upon himself the sins of all the world.

Though he is a sinner because of the sins of the three worlds, and a saint because of the virtues of the three worlds, even

then, none of the sins and none of the virtues can touch him. In the *Rudra-Sukta*, the *rishi* says :

" *yavaascha me tilaascha me godhuumaascha me,*"

" Give me jowar, give me sesame, give me wheat." How big must be the stomach of this *rishi*, who thus keeps demanding everything ! But he who demands all this is not the six-foot body, but the Self, assuming the form of the entire universe. I call this the " *vaidika visvatmabhava,*" the Vedic identity with the universe. We see in the *Vedas* the culmination of this *bhavana.* Narsi Mehta, the Gujerati saint, while singing holy songs, says, " My Lord, what sin have I committed, that I should feel sleepy even while I praise your name ?" But was it Narsi Mehta that felt sleepy ? No, it was those who listened to him. But Narsi Mehta asked this question identifying himself with his listeners. This was the state of his being. This is the state of all seers. In this state, it will appear to one that all the sins and all the virtuous actions of the world take place through one. And that is what the seer would say too. Does not the *rishi* say, " Many things that ought not to be done, I have done, I am doing, I shall do " ? When this state of being is achieved, the soul begins to soar like a bird leaving the earth behind.

The seer has a state of activity corresponding to this state of being. What would the seer do spontaneously ? Whatever he does will only be *sattvik.* Though he is still held within the limits of the human frame, his whole body and all his senses have become *sattvik* ; and so all his actions can only be *sattvik.* From the practical point of view, the ultimate perfection of the *sattvik* nature will be found in his actions. But looked at from the point of view of identity with the universe, it will be seen that, though the sins and the virtues of the three worlds are his, he is not touched by them, for he has taken off this close-fitting garment of the body and thrown it away. It is only when we remove and cast away this transient body that the universal form comes to us.

Besides a state of being and a state of action, a third state also belongs to the seer. That is the state of awareness. In this state he does not bear with either sin or virtue. He flings everything aside. He is ready to set fire to the whole universe. He is not prepared to take the responsibility for any action. He cannot bear even the touch of it. In the *jnani's* state of freedom, when he has reached the end of *sadhana*, these three states become possible.

How is one to attain this state of inactivity, the final state ? We have to train ourselves not to take upon our heads the responsibility for the actions we perform, the burden of doership. We should keep reflecting, " I am only the occasion ; I am not the doer of the deed." We should, with humility, take up the stand that we are not the doer of action. But it cannot be said that with this alone all sense of doership will leave us. Little by little, this *bhavana* will grow. First let us feel—" I am nothing ; I am a toy in His hands, a puppet that He sets dancing." Then let us try to feel that whatever gets done is born of the body. I have no contact with it. All these activities belong to this corpse. But I am no corpse. " I am not a *sava*, but *Siva*, not a corpse, but the Lord." Let us not get caught up in the body's meshes. When we have done this, we shall attain the state of the *jnani* and feel that we have no connection at all with the body. Now we shall experience the three states of the final stage, as described above. First, the state of activity, in which pure and perfect action takes place through the *jnani*. Secondly, the state of being in which, although he feels that he does all the sins and all the virtuous actions in the three worlds, none of them ever touches him. And thirdly, the state of awareness in which he does not allow the slightest action to approach him. He burns all action to ashes. We can describe the *jnani*, the seer, through each of these three states.

(108) Thou, Thou, Thou alone

After having said all this, the Lord tells Arjuna, " You have heard with attention all that I have been saying. Now, Arjuna, consider fully, and do what you think right." Thus the Lord generously sets Arjuna free. This is the greatness of the *Gita*. But once again the Lord feels pity. The freedom of will that He gave to Arjuna, he takes back again. He says, " Arjuna, give up your will, your effort ; give up everything, and come and take refuge in me." Thus inducing him to find refuge in Him, the Lord takes back the freedom of will He has just given. What this means is : Don't let any desire of your own arise in your heart. Rest with the thought, " Not my will, but His, be done." Let us of our own free will attain the experience that we do not want this freedom of will. Let us feel, " I am not. Thou alone art. Thou art everything." The goat when alive bleats, " Me......me......me......" that is, " I, I, I." But when it is dead and its guts are made into strings and mounted on the bow for carding cotton, then, as Dadu says, it sings, " *tuhi, tuhi, tuhi* "—" Thou, Thou, Thou alone." Now all is " Thou, Thou, Thou alone."

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